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MEMORIES
OF
OLIVET
OLIVE TREE IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

600091146R

MEMORIES OF OLIVET.

Prosenchas
Sheepfolds, &c
Probable site of
Calvary, to left

Short road to
Bethany
Road of
David's flight

David's Altar.
The Two Cedar Trees.
Lavatory &c
"The Olive Tree"

Gethsemane
The Kedron.

Hosanna Road
from Bethany

Moab Mountains
Mount of Offence
Valley of Jehoshaphat
Red Heifer Bridge

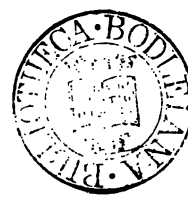
Tower of Ophel
Temple
City Wall
Burying Ground.

MEMORIES OF OLIVET.

BY

J. R. MACDUFF, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "MORNING AND NIGHT WATCHES," "THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK," "SUNSETS ON THE HEBREW MOUNTAINS," ETC. ETC.



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PREFACE.

ANY prefatory observations are here unnecessary, as these have been embodied in the introductory chapter.

The volume is intended to be uniform in design and purport with the "MEMORIES OF GENNESARET," and the "MEMORIES OF BETHANY." Scenes connected with MOUNT OLIVET, of undying interest to every Christian, have been, as in the case of the two former, grouped together.

The frontispiece engraving is a careful attempt, under the guidance of reliable authorities, to reproduce the Mount of Olives as it was in the time of our Lord, and which may prove in some degree helpful in the perusal of the succeeding pages.

It is hoped that the contents of the opening chapter will not be considered incongruous with those which follow. It seemed desirable to conduct the Reader through this outer portico, before entering OLIVET's inner Sanctuary of holier thought.

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I.

The Mount.

"THE MOUNTAIN WHICH IS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE CITY."—EZEK. XI. 23.

"THE MOUNT THAT IS CALLED THE MOUNT OF OLIVES."—LUKE XXI. 37.

THE MOUNT.

INTRODUCTORY.

A RECENT personal visit has confirmed the long-entertained impression, that the most interesting locality in Palestine—and if so, in one sense, the most interesting spot in the world—is THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.*

For this pre-eminent distinction, it is doubtless indebted entirely, like other localities in that land of marvels, to the undying memories which cluster around it; and yet, apart from these, it possesses, in no ordinary degree, physical features peculiar to itself, and which render it almost unique among other celebrated localities. "The place is nothing—the associations are everything," is the feeling of which, generally speaking, all travellers, in traversing the desolate, featureless valleys of that once hallowed region, are painfully conscious. Yet there are some striking and remarkable exceptions, and pre-eminently so is OLIVET. So far, indeed, as the mount itself is concerned, a thousand scenes in our own and in other lands are alike infinitely grander and more beautiful. There is nothing conspicuous in height, nothing picturesque in form, nothing re-

* Other references to this visit will be found throughout the volume illustrative of its contents; these, however, have generally been inserted in footnotes, so as not to interrupt the continuity of the text.

markable, as in other sister mountains in Palestine, in colour. We had long been familiar, in imagination at least, with its *contour*. But the moment can never be forgotten, when, coming up from the sterner Old Testament memories of Bethhoron and Gibeon, the well-known outline of "the mount before Jerusalem" disclosed itself from the heights of Nebi-Samuel. It was the first time any of the localities revealed themselves, which bore the impress of the Redeemer's presence and footsteps—the first glimpse obtained of the scenes of His teaching, His miracles, His agony, His triumph. Apart, however, from these overpowering feelings, there was nothing arresting or impressive. As the eye traversed that wide panorama, an otherwise unconspicuous green swell, with triple top, sprinkled with trees, and crowned apparently with a ruin—this, with an unpretending walled town fronting its western slope, studded with a few domes and minarets, at once and for ever took its place, in the most sacred shrine of memory, as the first view of *Jerusalem* and THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

It requires, however, to be on the Mount itself, to appreciate its peculiar claims to our admiration. In pursuing its bridle-paths, or wandering on its slopes, the feature which makes the first and deepest impression, is the proximity of this isolated green hill to the Holy City itself,—the narrow gorge of the Kedron alone dividing them; and which in olden time must still more remarkably have separated busy life from quiet seclusion—the hum of a great capital from "sequestered solitude." What Lycabettus was to Athens and the Athenians, or, if we might be allowed a more home and homely reference, what Arthur's Seat was, and is, to our

own northern capital,—such was OLIVET, and especially in former times, to Jerusalem. The comparison might be pursued between these three mountains, at all events, in the conspicuous feature common to all, (and in each case so impressive,) the view from their summits. There are few prospects in the world finer than what are obtained from the two former. From the rocky apex of the Attic mount, the eye takes in at a glance, Athens and its Acropolis, the Ægean Sea, Salamis, and the graceful hills of Ægina; besides a grand sweep of varied landscape, from Hymettus on the left, to the bold mountains to the far right which encircle the Gulf of Corinth. With the view from the Scottish Lycabettus more of our readers will be familiar, with its striking counterpart and duplicate of Acropolis and Mars Hill, and nobler than blue Ægean. But though in some respects it be unfair, comparing what are in themselves so dissimilar, we hesitate not to say, that, in diversity and strangeness of combination, the view from the summit of OLIVET will not suffer when thus confronted with its western compeers. The striking feature here is that of *contrast;*—a contrast which, as we have just said, must have been greater and stranger still, when the city hard by, now comparatively solitary, was then "full of people." In the palmy days of Jerusalem, it must have seemed like a vast Border watch-tower, separating death from life. Not more striking the transition between the green strip of the Nile in Egypt and the barren contiguous desert: not more striking the contrast between the tropical verdure on the banks of the Barrada at Damascus, with the arid desolation of the hills of bare red earth, at whose base rushes its life-giving stream;

than that between the view on the one side of OLIVET,—the hallowed and gorgeous magnificence of Jerusalem, "beautiful for situation," (the western slope of this *Jebel Tûr** keeping vigil, like a wakeful Levite, over its sacred edifices,)——with that on the other,—a wild sea of sand-hills and limestone rocks, tossed and tumbled, as with Titan hands, in endless, fantastic, savage confusion, till they sink in the deep depression of the Jordan valley;—the Dead Sea gleaming like dulled quicksilver in the far distance, backed by the wall of the Moab mountains. When these latter have their weird forms tinted with the varying hues of evening, the intervening barrenness becomes more apparent. It seems an awful and impressive picture of desolation and death, set in a frame of turquoise and amethyst.

But if such be the MOUNT OF OLIVES, apart from sacred associations, what must it be with them? It reminds us of these same mountains of Edom of which we have just spoken, when their gray rocks and furrowed ridges, picturesque in themselves, are gilded and glorified with sunlight. Holy memories indeed! from the time when Abraham was here greeted, as there is a strong probability in believing he was, by the aged priest of Salem, on his way from the conquest of the five kings to his tents and terebinths at Hebron;†

* *Jebel Tûr:*—"The mountain of mountains:" "the strong mount:" "the mountain rock:" the Arabic and Chaldee name for the Mount of Olives. What Hermon—"Jebel-esh-Sheikh"—"the Chief mountain," was to Dan and Naphthali in northern Palestine, so was OLIVET to the southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah,—"*the* Mount" *par excellence.* Mount Tabor is also called, at this day, Jebel Tûr, from its conspicuous summit: although Van de Velde supposes this to be simply a contraction of "Tabor."

† The king of Sodom went out to meet him "at the valley of Jhaveh,

or as he journeyed from Beersheba, and looked towards the olive-crowned summit from the heights of Rephaim, when "he lifted up his eyes and saw the place (Moriah) afar off," and rejoiced at the foreshadowed sacrifice;—until He whose "Day" made him glad, Himself trod its green slopes,—the true Isaac,—the divine-human Victim,—"the Lamb for the burnt-offering,"—who in the depths of its olive groves had the fillets bound around his brows for His own great oblation. Need we say it is with HIM Olivet is most sacredly identified. Interesting as are the few Old Testament memories which gather around it, these have "no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth." There is a tradition in one of the Jewish Targums, that the dove of Noah plucked the olive leaf from one of its trees. The tradition contains, at all events, a nobler spiritual verity. The true Dove of Peace, whose office it is to glorify Jesus,—"He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you," (John xvi. 14,)—has plucked from this mount, or rather from the lips of its great Teacher, more than from any other spot in the Holy Land, olive branches of comfort and hope for the tempest-tossed. Its every nook is baptized with His prayers and tears, His prophecies and warnings, and echoes with His latest benediction. It is a silent evangelist of the life of Christ;—the Ararat on which the true Ark rested, and on which the bow of covenant-promise shone in holiest lustre. The story of Redeeming love is

which is the king's dale," and where also Melchizedek brought forth his bread and wine. Josephus—a sufficiently trustworthy authority on such a point—evidently places this "king's dale" immediately to the east of Jerusalem.

graven as with an iron pen and lead on its rocks for ever! No sooner do we descend from the gate of St Stephen, by the old worn path trodden by the millions of successive generations, and reach the bridge across the Kedron, than we are on the footsteps of Jesus. However sadly we may fail to track these, in the ruined streets we have left behind, (the poor modern travesty of "the City of the Great King,") we find them constantly here. It was in the truest sense His home. We never read of Him spending a night in Jerusalem. But oft and again, when "every man went unto his own house, Jesus went unto the MOUNT OF OLIVES," (John vii. 53, and viii. 1;)*—"And in the daytime he was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out and abode in the mount called the Mount of Olives," (Luke xxi. 37;) "And he came out (of the city) and went, *as he was wont*, to the Mount of Olives," (Luke xxi. 37;) "Jesus ofttimes resorted thither," (John xviii. 2.) Thus, more than any other spot in Palestine, (not even Nazareth or Capernaum excepted,) is the traveller conscious of an almost overpowering impression of the Redeemer's Humanity, the realisation of Him as a living Personal Presence. The all-absorbing, soul-stirring thought, amid these identical features of unchanging nature, is this: On these same rocks and knolls, the eye of the Son of God and the Lord of glory rested. From the top of Olivet, or as He crossed its shoulder by the Bethany bridle-path, He saw yonder sun rise, just as it does now, over the purple wall of Moab; He heard the birds welcome the morning beams;

* An unfortunate division of the chapter made by our excellent translators in our authorised version, dissevers these verses, which have a touching meaning and pathos when thus read in connexion.

He witnessed the lark carolling in the azure sky; or, it may be, the magnificent eagle, the oldest and noblest emblem of His own protection and love, soaring overhead;* He listened to the rustling of the gray olive leaf; He saw that carpet of gorgeous wild flowers, before they received their touching modern name of "The Saviour's blood-drops," and which still cluster in the "olive-bordered way," where the Hosannahs greeted Him, and where His tears fell. In a sense far truer, though far different from that intended to be conveyed by the Jewish tradition in the *Midrash* of Rabbi Jenna, "the Divine Majesty dwelt three years and a half on the Mount of Olives, to see whether the Jewish people would, or would not, repent, calling, 'Return unto me, and I will return unto you;' 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;' and then, when all was vain, returned to its own place." † While at the present day, and for the last fifteen centuries, thousands on thousands of devout worshippers have crowded to the Holy Land to see what they imagine to be the Holy Sepulchre, and to worship in the church erected on the traditional spot,—we need not wonder that Eusebius, in one of his early works, written before the journey of the Empress Helena to Jerusalem, speaks of the many pilgrims who come up from all parts of the earth to worship on the MOUNT OF OLIVES.‡ Not "an high hill as the hill of Bashan;" not bold in outline and rich in vegetation as Tabor;—a mere undulation compared with towering Hermon and its diadem of eternal snow:—yet of this guardian mountain, this "lion

* Deut. xxxii. 11.

† Lightfoot, ii. 39.

‡ See Thrapp's *Ancient Jerusalem*, p. 223.

of Judah," overlooking his "rocky den in Zion," (Ps. lxvi. 2,) it may be appropriately said, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey," (Ps. lxvi. 4;) or as the inspired minstrel again speaks of the same adjoining summit,—"Why leap ye," (why look ye with envious eye,) "ye high hills? *this* is the hill which God desireth to dwell in, yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever," (Ps. lxviii. 16.)

The double claim on our interest and regard, which, as we have sought to show in the preceding pages, the Mount of Olives, possesses, may be noted and illustrated further in detail, (it may form the most suitable introduction to the chapters which follow,) by transcribing some rough jottings taken on the spot. Such impressions—photographed, so to speak, at the moment, under its own living light—must at least be truthful. In company with a friend, and with our Bibles (the best of all Palestine guides) in hand, several hours of a bright Sabbath in spring, were spent in leisurely traversing the various scenes of interest on its sacred ground, and gathering up their vivid and impressive lessons;—a Sabbath which the writer can never cease to regard as the most memorable in his life. These notes, being copied as they were written at the moment, will account for their abrupt and fragmentary character. There is no change but to complete unfinished sentences, and a few needful verbal amendments.

MOUNT OF OLIVES,
Sabbath the 17th March 1867.

I am sitting, at this moment, on the ledge of the bridge over "the brook Kedron," with its dry channel, my foot on

the first spot of ground on OLIVET. The morning services in the English Church on Zion may well give an appropriate tone to a Sabbath sojourn and communion on *the Mount:* text of the sermon Ps. lxxxvii.—"*His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.*" As I write, GETHSEMANE with its old olives is within a hundred paces: other gnarled trees of the same, still nearer, may possibly be those of the Agony. Not a breath ruffles their foliage, nor that of the dark silent cypress intermingled with them. . . . . I look round on the Temple wall,—a road is at its base. This must have been the very same which Jesus and His disciples traversed. The enclosure of Gethsemane is unsightly in the extreme; but one is glad of the shelter from this oppressive sun, while we read together the touching account in Luke, of the Gethsemane sufferings. We are close by the large stone and little hillock pointed out as that whereon the disciples were found sleeping for sorrow. . . . . .

. . . . . We are now wending up the road leading to the top of OLIVET, the same which I pursued alone yesterday, and where, at the same place, I saw, quite close, a magnificent eagle describing its gigantic gyrations,* forcibly reminding of the figure applied to Israel of old, and which will doubtless be true of Israel restored, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone

* It is somewhat remarkable that, unlike the experience of other travellers, this was the only fine specimen either of wild beast or bird seen durgni our journey through Palestine.

did lead him," (Deut. xxxii. 11.) This, too, is doubtless the road which our Lord and His apostles most frequently took on their way to Bethany; and by which the latter returned to Jerusalem after the Ascension. . . . . Have just passed a fig-tree on the right, but not like the one doomed by the Saviour, "having nothing but leaves," for the figs are already formed, and the leaves are only bursting and no more. . . . . We have come to an olive grove full of venerable trees, similar to what we saw, four days ago, near Bethhoron. . . . . Nebi-Samuel to the left, the most conspicuous point in the view. Truly appropriate, if, as has been supposed, it formed the site of the "Great high place"—where the Tabernacle was pitched by Solomon, previous to its final removal to Mount Zion.

. . . . . .

We are now seated on the northern summit of OLIVET, to the north of the Bethany road. . . . . More of a bird's eye view of the Temple area. Have just read together the 8th of 1st Kings; and been picturing that wondrous scene of consecration when thousands on thousands were doubtless ranged, where now we are, gazing down in rapt devotion. Yonder is Mount Zion, from which the Ark was brought; and there the sacred courts where Solomon offered his vast sacrifices. . . . . How intense the solitude and quiet at this moment! Not a sound: not one wreath of smoke is seen in the city, nor even song of bird heard: only one or two ghost-like female figures in white, are flitting along the crumbling pavement of the Mosque of Omar. "How doth the city sit solitary!" . . . . . The northern outlier of OLIVET intervenes, and shuts out all but Nebi-Samuel with

its tower;—otherwise we should have a view of several of the interesting localities seen last week, Gibeon, &c.*

. . . . . Returned east, by David's road "toward the way of the wilderness." We have paused and read together "at the top of the Mount," where "he worshipped God"—the passage in the 15th of 2d Samuel. Could it be, on yonder stony limestone cliff, that Shimei came out to curse the king? The view, at present, is wonderful from this point. Large masses of cumulous summer clouds, in summer glory, project deep shadows on the white billowy roll of otherwise featureless hills which descend in rapidly-shelving masses to the *crevasse* † of the Jordan and Dead Sea. The mountains of Moab and Ammon as they near the latter, are dimmed; but they come out grandly as we gaze on the spot where Jordan enters "the Asphaltite Lake." . . . . . We remember that the country before and around us was the seat of the Amorite kings, so much in our thoughts a day or two ago, in connexion with Joshua's great battles at Gibeon and Bethhoron. We can only dimly discern in the haze and glare, the rocky cliffs, on one of which Kerak (Kir Moab) must be; and another on which Balaam stood.‡

* This intervening height was Scopus. It reminded of the many "armies of the alien" which have made it their tenting-ground. Here Cestius first pitched his camp, and afterwards Titus. Here it was Sennacherib "shook his hand against the mountain of the Daughter of Zion —the hill of Jerusalem," (Isa x. 32.)

† This ocean-like swell of these strange snowy-looking hills, seamed apparently with *crevasses* and covered with *moraines*, often suggested the recollection of the view, with which Alpine explorers are familiar, of the Mer de Glace as seen from the Jardin, at Chamouni. This was specially recalled when traversing the savage road—(a very valley of the shadow of death)—between the convent of Mar Saba and the Dead Sea.

‡ "From the top of the rocks he saw," (Num. xxiii. 9.)

Pisgah too must be there, (we have just read the passage in Deut.,) from whose summit the greatest of old world heroes descried "that goodly mountain even Lebanon." In one of those ravines "in the land of Moab over against Bethpeor" "God buried him." . . . . . Nigh where we are now looking, Israel must have advanced to the land of promise. . . . . We have been reminded also (and turned to the passage) of the beautiful episode in the history of these Moab valleys—the story of Ruth and Naomi.

. . . . . Then that strange country lying between us and the Jordan valley was the scene of John's preaching and of the Saviour's temptation;—we have read together the description in St Matthew. The outer framework seems strikingly to fit the picture. Truly "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." What a scene for that superhuman conflict, when the Tempter "left HIM for a season," to prepare for the more awful struggle in the place which we have a little ago gazed upon—*Gethsemane.* . . . . . Yonder too is Jordan; but I confess it is not "the silvery gleam through the strip of emerald" I had expected to find it. It seems, from this point, a featureless river flowing through a blasted plain, on to its deep grave in the Dead Sea. . . . . Full of strange mingled memories is that site of Sodom and Gomorrah. We have just glanced over the whole passage, describing the battle of the confederated chiefs, "Tidal King of nations," &c. &c.—We can picture their terrible rout: and, even from our last week's journey, can imagine the difficulties, in such a country, of the old Patriarch's whirlwind march, by day and by night, till he overtook the conquerors, with their ill-gotten spoil, at Damascus.

Then we can see in imagination (perhaps within sight of where we are now sitting) that mysterious personage of Old Testament history—the type of a Greater who in after ages trod the same spot—coming forth from "Salem," with "bread and wine" and his priestly blessing.

. . . . . .

Turning south towards "the hill country of Judea."—These hills are generally featureless and monotonous, but a striking range of rugged mountains are on this side the Dead Sea.—Bethany is between; but hid from view. Can that be Bethphage, the ruins crowning the rounded eminence on the other side of Bethany? But it seems too far south-east for this.* We see most prominently farther south—Beth-haccerem—or the "Frank Mountain," as it was named by the Crusaders.† . . . . . Despite of modern authorities that would remove the scene to Gerizim, may not that height in the middle distance, in the direction of Bethlehem and

* We afterwards discovered this prominent village to be Abhû Dis. I find now it has often been mistaken by travellers for Bethphage. But the grounds on which its claims are negatived seem irresistible. See subsequent chapter, in which Bethphage is treated.

† It was also called *Jebel-el-Fureidis*—the "Paradise" of Herod, which that base and unscrupulous king adorned with gardens, and where he himself was buried. This conspicuous mountain, although in a very much smaller form, always reminded the writer, in its outline, of the home-scene with which he is most familiar, the view of Ben Lomond, as seen from Loch Ard, Perthshire. The resemblance of many places in the Holy Land to well-known scenes in Scotland more than once occurred. Notably, the view of Carmel from the eastern end of the plain of Esdraelon near Jenin, to that of the Carse of Stirling near the sources of the Forth, bounded in the distance by Damyat and the Ochil range. No wonder so conspicuous a hill as *El-Fureidis* was made, in the olden time, one of the beacon-stations for the use of torch-signals. "Set up a sign of fire in *Bethhaccerem*," (Jer. vi. 1.)

Hebron, be the spot where the Father of the Faithful, with his son Isaac at his side, "lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off"? We have read the passage together, and it seems well to dovetail with the narrative. . . . . And nearer still, is the valley of Rephaim, the old boundary line between Judah and Benjamin.*

. . . . . .

To complete the Panorama we must turn to the west. In the distance are Solomon's "mountains of Bether:"—and in this clear atmosphere, appearing close at our feet, is the city of the Great King.† The tower of Hippicus stands out prominently by the Jaffa Gate. Directly opposite is St Stephen's, and the long-closed Golden Gate with its double archway. Most conspicuous of all, of course, is the octagonal Mosque of Omar, with its gardens and funereal cypresses. Close to where we now are, must have been the chief lunar station. ‡

* There it was David encountered the Philistines: "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees" was the Divine watchword for battle and victory. Once a fruitful spot this "Valley of Giants" must have been;—for prosperous Israel is compared to "one gathering ears in the Valley of Rephaim," (Isa. xvii. 5.)

† I find Warburton, in his "*Crescent and the Cross*," (after all, the best of books on Eastern travel,) graphically speaks, in describing this very view, of "the atmosphere being like a crystal lens, and every object in the Holy City as clear as if it lay within a few yards, instead of a mile's distance. Each battlement upon those war-worn walls, each wild flower that clusters over them, is visible," p. 236. I am glad to find such an authority thus briefly endorsing my humble estimate of the prospect from the summit of Olivet, "From hence is the most interesting, if not the most striking view in the world. From it is laid bare every fibre of the great heart of Palestine."—*Ib.*

‡ Here the appearance of the new moon, from torches waved on the mountains of Moab, was signified to the Temple-officials, and also communicated to the various mountain-heights in the land.

. . . . . .

"Fair as the moon," . . . . . "and *terrible as an army with banners.*"* For here the 10th Roman Legion under Titus had their fortified camp, and closed in mortal combat with the Jews near to Gethsemane.† But we must now leave the height, and with it the view of Jerusalem, descending towards Bethany.

. . . . . .

I am now seated on a stone embossed with lichen, and the ground strewed around with crimson anemones. The almond-tree is blossoming, and the fig-tree just putting forth its tender leaves. This spot I shall always in future thought, associate with the scene of *The Ascension.* It is a secluded platform of rock—abutting from the beaten path—with a gentle valley on either side. It seems best, or well to correspond with the ἐως εἰς *Βεθανιον.* We have just read the brief but remarkable passages; and love to think of that glorious Ascent—up, it may be, in such a deep blue sky as is now o'ercanopying our heads. The view from this spot down to the Jordan, the Dead Sea, and Moab mountains, is grand in the extreme. Indeed nothing on all Olivet has so impressed me, as the magnificence of the prospect which, evening after evening, must have disclosed itself here to the eye of Incarnate Majesty and Love; when, in the glow of the setting sun, those hills, which have now on them the sultry haze of mid-day, are changed into ruby. This is the third time in succession I have visited the spot. No wonder

* Sol. Song, vi. 10.

† It is recorded that the ground was soaked with blood—"His blood be upon us and upon our children!" (Matt. xxvii. 25.)

"Jesus ofttimes resorted thither," to enjoy, in this Sabbath calm, exemption from the noise and tumult of the city.* . . . . . Bethany is just in sight and no more, with the Frank Mountain again in the distance.

. . . . . .

We have not visited Bethany to-day, but preferred descending by the lofty ridge on the right, which joins the lower road between it and Jerusalem. . . . . A Sabbath-day's meditation on OLIVET would not be complete were we to omit the best authenticated scene of all its Scripture incidents—that of "the Triumphal entry." We have just been seated at the spot in "the Valley of Bethany," when Jerusalem first comes in sight—(As we were reading the passages, and as I now write, a large flock of sheep are between us and the city, following a group of shepherds. In other flocks we have seen, goats have been intermingled; in which case apparently, the shepherd *follows* and drives them. But the *sheep* "hear the shepherd's voice" and they "know" and "follow" him.) There are two successive

* I find in a home letter on my first visit to the same place, after confessing to disappointment with other localities, I thus expressed myself on returning to our tents at night—"The Mount of Olives and our day's ride across it, redeems all. I am not referring to sacred associations, although it is difficult to dismiss these, but I was amazed with the wild grandeur and beauty of the view from the top of Olivet and from Bethany: the sweep of olive-clad valleys interspersed with limestone rocks:—the long range of undulating country between us and the deep gorge of the Jordan; and, though only dimly visible through chequered light, the grand wall of Moab mountains. I was specially touched to think of all this landscape being that which was daily familiar to the eye of Jesus and His disciples to and fro in their journeys to Bethany. What a glory these old olives give to the Mount which bears their name!" &c.—*Friday, March 15th.*

views of Jerusalem by this road. After obtaining the first of these, the path takes a steep and curved descent, into what our guide told us on Friday was called "The Valley of Bethany." On reaching this lowest point, the view of the gorge, down towards the Valley of Rephaim (?) is alike wild and beautiful, reminding of some of our own quieter Highland straths—only the lime-stone giving a brighter aspect.

. . . . . .

But we have now reached the culminating point—the most striking turn in what is now so well known as the "Hosanna road"—fringed all round with those crimson anemones, touchingly called "Christ's blood-drops." Their red lips seem still uttering a silent testimony of love to Him who here paused in His triumph, and at the sight of the city was dissolved in a flood of tears.* . . . . . We finish our five hours, by seating ourselves "over against the Temple," where the Lord must have sat (or nigh to the place) with His disciples, as described in Matthew xxiv. It must have been, too, at this very time of the evening, when the sun was reddening with his fires the Rocks of Moab. We select what appears a probable locality. Great deep shadows are flinging themselves

* "A specially rich cluster of them were at the undoubted spot, where He saw the city and wept over it."—*Home Letter.* I may here add, nothing can exceed the beauty and diversity of the spring flowers in Palestine; and more especially the glow imparted to hill and valley in the morning or evening sunlight from patches of this same anemone. I never can forget one evening in particular, riding along the tropical plain of Jericho, the flush of crimson glory on one of the mountain-sides near the Dead Sea. The floral brilliancy of March and April is one great reason for the selection of these months for the tour of the Holy Land, when "the winter is past, the rain (the latter rain) is over, and gone; *and the* FLOWERS *appear on the earth,*" (Sol. Song, ii. 11, 12.)

across the gorge of the Kedron: the westering sun is gilding the domes and cupolas of the city as well as the bright patches of spring verdure on the slopes of Olivet and Zion. Have just read together the passage. . . . . The reference to the Fig-tree, "Learn a parable," &c., we have seen to-day over and over illustrated: "summer is nigh;" and it is just putting forth its tender leaves. Also, from the same spot, may not the sight of such a shepherd and flock as we have now met, possibly have suggested the grand Judgment-day parable of the sheep and the goats?

. . . . . .

But the shadows of evening are creeping farther and farther up the mountain side. It is now also near the anniversary of the Agony; and having completed the circuit of the mountain, we are again reminded of the Great event, by finding ourselves, where we started, at ever-revered and loved GETHSEMANE. What a Sanctuary! What a Sabbath-day's journey! Surely "it is good for us to be here." To HIM who gives it all its sacredness, let the prayer be breathed ere we cross the Kedron—"*Abide with us for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.*"

Ere we close these introductory remarks, it may be well to add, that the *Olivet* of the present is changed materially, in much of its outward aspect, from what it was in the day of its most sacred memories, and, as such, is shorn doubtless of many features of former attractiveness and beauty. Perhaps in nothing more so, than in the sparse groups of olive trees, the alone representatives, or rather successors, of noble

groves of these, which, interspersed with the terebinth,* pomegranate, fig, and palm, once clothed its sides and waved on its top. We know that the whole country for miles around, and specially "The Mount," was stripped of magnificent trees by the sappers in the army of Titus, for the purposes of the siege. In the words of a well-known writer, "The blooming gardens with their bubbling fountains and cool-water courses, in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem had enjoyed sweet hours of delight and recreation, were ruthlessly swept away. The trees now in spring-flower fell before the axe, the landmarks were thrown down, the water-courses destroyed: even the deep and shady glens were levelled, and filled up with the masses of rugged and picturesque rocks which used to overshadow them." . . . . . "All the fruitful orchards, the shady avenues where in these days of peace and happiness they had enjoyed the luxury of their delicious climate, the temperate days of spring, and the cool summer nights, were utterly destroyed. It was a lamentable sight to behold the whole gay and luxuriant suburban region turned to a frightful solitude."† Probably at the same time, the two celebrated cedars near its central summit, under whose canopy were ranged stalls and booths for vendors of the Temple-offerings, and on whose boughs nestled flocks of turtle-doves and pigeons, shared a similar fate. The same may be said of the towers, vineyards, oratories, olive-yards, and sheep-

* Every traveller is struck with the graceful and gigantic specimen of the terebinth north-east of the Damascus Gate, still surviving, as if to tell, like the few remaining stones in the Temple walls hard by, "what manner" others, at one time, must have been.

† *Milman's History of the Jews;* last edition, p. 324, 355.

folds, which have now well-nigh disappeared, all of which, however, must have given life and animation to the scene; —suggesting too, as they did to the Divine Redeemer, illustration for some of the most interesting of His parables and sayings. As is well known, a few ancient olive trees—denizens of the mount—still remain to mark and consecrate its most sacred spot—Gethsemane. But even here, alas! the hand of man has done what it could to mutilate and desecrate. Flagrant is the violation of all taste, not to say of reverential feeling, which has been perpetrated on these ever-hallowed precincts. For while the eight venerable trees still redeem its interest and sacredness, a mute protest cannot fail to rise from the heart of every pilgrim, as he sees the obtrusive white wall of clay and the modern artificial garden-plots, which have taken the place of the silent grove which formed the scene of the Agony. Even the Kedron, so intimately associated alike with Olivet and with these closing scenes in the life of Christ, seems to have shared, (though probably from causes purely physical,) the inevitable changes resulting from long centuries of desolation. It can no longer claim the appellation of "Brook;" and, unless in exceptional years, not even that of "a winter torrent." The traveller seeks in vain, in many places in that deep gorge, for any trace of a channel or water-course. Different, we have reason to believe, from the time of Jerusalem's glory, when the present sterile valleys were clothed in verdure, and when a richer vegetation must have materially affected the climate, generating and retaining moisture, not to be found, now that "the land languisheth."*

* Dr Robinson, in his invaluable work, offers the conjecture, that the

One other spot (shall we call it more sacred still even than Gethsemane?) may possibly be entitled, indirectly, to hold a place among the OLIVET MEMORIES. But as it is still matter of speculation, and must always be of extreme uncertainty, we have not ventured, by supporting a favourite theory, to include "CALVARY" among the other localities which have no such dubiety attached to them. We may only venture to affirm, that while apparently irresistible arguments negative the claims of the present traditional site of the Crucifixion and Holy Sepulchre,—there are not wanting strong presumptive grounds to fix that memory of memories, too, in the Valley of the Kedron. In this case "all His acquaintance, and the women which followed Him from Galilee, and who *stood afar off*, beholding these things," (Luke xxiii. 49,) would have gazed on the expiring agonies of their Divine Redeemer from the lower slopes of OLIVET.*

drying up of the Kedron may be referred to an anterior date and cause: so far back indeed as the reign of Hezekiah, when that monarch, taking counsel with his princes and his mighty men to cut off the water-supply from the Assyrian army, "stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, [diverted the fountain,] and brought it down to the west side of the city of David," (2 Chron. xxxii. 30;) in other words, that the water which aforetime fed the Kedron was thus conducted by some subterranean channel into the city.—See vol. i. p. 346. The researches of the "Palestine Exploration Society" will likely ere long throw light on this very question.

* A friend, subsequently referred to, to whose kindness I was much indebted in Jerusalem, and who moreover, from his long residence, is thoroughly conversant with topographical questions, in riding along with us on the day of our departure to Scopus, pointed to a rounded knoll in the Kedron valley, about a quarter of a mile higher up than Gethsemane, which, in common with others, he considers to answer remarkably the conditions and descriptions in the Evangelical narratives. "A place called Golgotha." According to St Luke "*The* place which is called a skull," [Luke xxiii. 33,] (not "of skulls," which it would have been if, as some suppose, a burying-ground—but [*κραν\ον*] probably of skull-shape—a rounded

We close these introductory remarks with one practical thought. OLIVET derives its undying sacredness from being, pre-eminently, the abode of Christ. But in the truest, most real sense, there is an *Olivet* around us all;—sacred ground, on which the ever-abiding PRESENCE may be felt and rejoiced in. We can say, in the glowing words of the Canticles, regarding that true Mount of faith, of which the earthly OLIVET was but the type and symbol, "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense," (Sol. Song iv. 6.) The lowliest chamber of the lowliest Christian may become a Peniel where he sees God "face to face;" more truly so, perhaps, than in treading those sacred eminences of which we have been speaking, where the cry seems ever to resound, in plaintive echoes, from profaned groves and desecrated altars, and amid the fables of a lying superstition—"they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him!" Indeed, although we have spoken of the vivid realisation of Christ's personal Presence in traversing Olivet—yet if it did not seem inconsistent and paradoxical, (every traveller at least will understand our meaning,) there is strangely blended with this, an equal—often a painful difficulty—in waking up to an adequate sense of these august realities, and bringing one's soul, from the altered present, into harmony with the stupendous transactions and associations

protuberance.) Then, it was *"the* place"—a known locality. It was near a thoroughfare—on the way to the country—for the title on the cross was read by "many of the Jews" who were passing to and fro, [John xix. 20.] It was outside the city gate, [Heb. xiii. 2,] but yet adjacent to the city, [John xix. 20.] Certainly all these notices singularly accord with the spot above indicated.—*See Art. "Golgotha," in Smith's Bible Dic.*

of the past. Nay; farther; holy scenes, or the most sacred of traditional "Holy Places," do not in themselves necessarily kindle or foster devotion. Nothing is often more painful than the absence, or at least deadness and chillness, of deep and profound emotion, at the moment when visiting spots whose very names we have been wont to pronounce with bated breath. The words poured into a sinner's ear, by the same Divine lips, at another locality equally sacred, enshrine a truth of pre-eminent comfort to those who have no *Olivet* to climb but Faith's "delectable mountain,"—no oratory to kneel at but the bedside,—no Gethsemane to repair to but the sublime consciousness of the Great Sufferer's undying sympathy in their hour of darkness and soul-struggle,—"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him," (John iv. 21–23.) Yes,—"neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem." Gerizim and Olivet are silent and voiceless—ruined deserted altar-stones, which memorialise—no more—a glory which has departed. But at what place soever "the Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee," there, there is a present God. The first hymn sung at our tent-worship on our first Sabbath in Palestine, amid the orange-groves of Jaffa, forms the true key-note of this "true worshipper" "worshipping the Father:"—

> "Jesus, *where'er* Thy people meet,
> There they behold Thy mercy-seat;

Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
And *every place* is hallow'd ground."

Impressively as these consecrated spots go to confirm and illustrate the Gospel story, and thus indirectly to strengthen the evidences of Christianity, yet, if the writer might be allowed another personal reference, he felt that a testimony, greater and more convincing far to the truth of religion, was that supplied immediately after his return home, at the sick-bed and death-bed of a beloved member of his flock; one, vigorous in intellect as well as matured in grace, whose faith (to use his own words) "every hour death drew nearer, grew stronger and stronger," as from the Olivet of Prayer he descried with clear eye the walls of the better New Jerusalem, "whose gates shall not be shut at all by day!" "Because thou hast seen thou hast believed: *blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.*" * Olivet, Ramah, Gibeon, Bether, and the sisterhood of encircling hills, live only to symbolise a glorious, deathless truth, which, with the name of Zion for its centre, has the broad earth for its circumference—"as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so doth the Lord compass his people from henceforth and for ever," (Ps. cxxv. 2.) Meanwhile let us reverently draw near in thought to a place so surrounded with holy memories;—saying, as may be pre-eminently said of "the mount which is before Jerusalem," and of Him who when on earth made it His most consecrated haunt, "SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE. . . . . THIS IS NONE OTHER THAN THE HOUSE OF GOD, AND THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN!" †

* John xx. 29.

† After these sentences were written;—in refreshing my memory with

*** It may not be out of place in connexion with what gave the mount its distinctive appellation of "*Olivet*," or "*The olives*," (2 Sam. xv. 30,) to say a word on *the Olive Tree*.

All who have seen the olive, in this the land of its glory, will understand the allusion and comparison of the prophet of Israel, "His beauty shall be as the olive tree,"

his vivid descriptions, I find similar reflections, thus admirably expressed, had occurred, on the same spot, to my friend the author of "*Eastward*."—"I was not tempted even to fancy on that holy day, that Christ was nearer to me, or prayer more real in Jerusalem or on Olivet, than when I entered 'into my closet and shut the door,' amidst the every-day world of Glasgow. And so, while I thanked God, with my whole heart, for having permitted me to visit these spots which shed such a light on the history of the Holy One, who in the flesh had lived and moved among them, I felt if possible still more thankful for the conviction, now deepened, that the poorest in my parish at home—the busy artizan, the man or woman in the dark lane, the crowded alley, or the lonely garret—could, through simple faith and child-like love, enjoy the presence, the grace, and the peace of Christ, as truly as if they were able to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and to worship, on the Lord's Day, among the recesses of Olivet, or on the spots consecrated of old by the bodily presence of the Saviour. Most thankful was I for knowing that the person, not the place, was holy—that His love was not local, but universal; and that not only among the silent hills of Palestine—in Jerusalem, Nazareth, or Tiberias, but in our crowded cities, common place villages, highland glens, and in every nook and corner of the great palace our Father, Jesus may be known, loved obeyed, and glorified. With thanksgiving I repeated on Olivet:—

'There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime,—
Who carry music in their heart,
Though dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.'"

Eastward, pp. 188, 189.

(Hosea xiv. 6.) Also the Psalmist's reference, "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God," (Ps. lii. 8.) Though used extensively of old, as now, for an article of commerce, it would seem, like the cypress of the Mohammedan, to have possessed, in the eyes of the Jews, a sacred character, and to have been employed at times as a national and religious emblem. Its wood was used in the most hallowed and conspicuous parts of Solomon's temple; "within the oracle he made two cherubims of *olive* tree, each ten cubits high." . . . "and for the entering of the oracle he made doors of *olive* tree," (these gates were two leaved and overlaid with gold.) . . . "So also made he, for the door of the temple, posts of *olive* tree, a fourth part of the wall," (1 Kings vi. 23, 31, 33.) The tabernacle and temple lamps were "fed with pure olive oil beaten for light," (Lev. xxiv. 2.) Olive branches, as we shall find, were employed at one at least of the Israelites' sacred feasts, and wreaths of it are supposed to surround several of their ancient coins. I have never seen the remark specially made in the record of any journeyings in the Holy Land—and hence, perhaps, the reason of having been struck with this more than with any other feature of Palestine, that it is literally "the land of Olives." It is the grand characteristic—the distinctive glory, of the country. Groups, plantations, *forests*, bestud its mountains, plains, and valleys, from whatever point it is entered in the south, till you bid to it farewell amid the magnificent olive groves of Kedesh-Naphtali and Banias. And the peculiarity is, that in most places the trees appear to be venerable occupants of the soil, their ancient trunks gnarled and twisted into most picturesque shapes. Those most specially memor-

able are at Bethhoron, Nablous, and near Bethlehem; the others, already mentioned, at Kedesh-Naphtali, and, of course, the reverend ones in Gethsemane. After all the manifold revolutions the land has undergone,—temples, towers, palaces, cities, perished from remembrance,—even after all that torch and axe could effect in despoiling her of her sylvan characteristics—"discovering her forests;"—while even of the Vine it may now literally be said, "the boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it," the OLIVE-TREE still continues to assert its ancestral renown; and like the hoary head, which is "a crown of glory," waves its silvery tresses on the hills of Palestine. We do not wonder that so discerning a traveller as Van de Velde should thus speak of the loveliest of all spots in the country, and of what constitutes the main feature in this beauty of Nablous and the valley of Shechem: "Here there is no wilderness, here there are no wild thickets; yet there is always shade: not of the oak, the terebinth, and the carob-tree, but of the *Olive-grove*—so soft in colour, so picturesque in form, that for its sake we can willingly dispense with all other wood." * The gray green colour of the leaf seemed always to accord well with the *triste* and mournful state of the land,—the ashen hue, so touchingly referred to in the following extract from the pen, which, of all others, can best do justice to the description. Had the writer, however, been in Palestine, he would not have omitted the most pictorial feature,—the wonderful variety in fantastic shape and form,—each patriarchal trunk a separate study:—"In the

* VAN DE VELDE'S *Travels in the Holy Land*, vol. 1, p. 386.

Holy Land, the reminiscences connected with it, are of course more touching than can ever belong to any other tree of the field. . . . It had been well for them" (the ancient painters) "to have felt and seen the Olive-tree, to have loved it for Christ's sake, partly also for the helmed Wisdom's sake, which was to the heathen, in some sort, as that nobler Wisdom which stood at God's right hand when He founded the earth, and established the heavens. To have loved it even to the hoary dimness of its delicate foliage, subdued and faint of hue, as if the ashes of the Gethsemane agony had been cast upon it for ever; and to have traced, line by line, the gnarled writhing of its intricate branches, and the pointed fretwork of its light and narrow leaves inlaid on the blue field of the sky; and the small rosy white stars of its spring blossoming, and the beads of sable fruits scattered by autumn along its topmost bough, (the right in Israel of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow;) and, more than all, the softness of the mantle, silver-gray and tender, like the down on a bird's breast, with which, far away, it veils the undulations of the mountains; these, it had been well for them to have seen and drawn, whatever they had left unstudied in the gallery."*

We may add Mrs Hemans's equally beautiful and descriptive lines—

> "But thou, pale Olive! in thy branches lie,
> Far deeper spells than prophet grove of old
> Might e'er enshrine. I could not hear thee sigh
> To the wind's faintest whisper, nor behold
> One shiver of thy leaves' dim silvery green,

* RUSKIN'S *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. p. 174.

Without high thoughts and solemn, of that scene
When in the garden the Redeemer pray'd,
When pale stars look'd upon His fainting head,
And angels, ministering in silent dread,
Trembled perchance within thy trembling shade."

II.

The Royal Flight Across the Mount.

"AND THERE CAME A MESSENGER TO DAVID, SAYING, THE HEARTS OF THE MEN OF ISRAEL ARE AFTER ABSALOM. AND DAVID SAID UNTO ALL HIS SERVANTS THAT WERE WITH HIM AT JERUSALEM, ARISE, AND LET US FLEE; FOR WE SHALL NOT ELSE ESCAPE FROM ABSALOM: MAKE SPEED TO DEPART, LEST HE OVERTAKE US SUDDENLY, AND BRING EVIL UPON US, AND SMITE THE CITY WITH THE EDGE OF THE SWORD. . . . . AND THE KING WENT FORTH, AND ALL THE PEOPLE AFTER HIM, AND TARRIED IN A PLACE THAT WAS FAR OFF. AND ALL HIS SERVANTS PASSED ON BESIDE HIM; AND ALL THE CHERETHITES, AND ALL THE PELETHITES, AND ALL THE GITTITES, SIX HUNDRED MEN WHICH CAME AFTER HIM FROM GATH, PASSED ON BEFORE THE KING. . . . . AND ALL THE COUNTRY WEPT WITH A LOUD VOICE, AND ALL THE PEOPLE PASSED OVER: THE KING ALSO HIMSELF PASSED OVER THE BROOK KIDRON, AND ALL THE PEOPLE PASSED OVER, TOWARD THE WAY OF THE WILDERNESS. . . . . AND DAVID WENT UP BY THE ASCENT OF MOUNT OLIVET, AND WEPT AS HE WENT UP, AND HAD HIS HEAD COVERED, AND HE WENT BAREFOOT: AND ALL THE PEOPLE THAT WAS WITH HIM COVERED EVERY MAN HIS HEAD, AND THEY WENT UP, WEEPING AS THEY WENT UP."—2 SAM. XV. 13, 14, 17, 18, 23, 30.

"AND WHEN KING DAVID CAME TO BAHURIM, BEHOLD, THENCE CAME OUT A MAN OF THE FAMILY OF THE HOUSE OF SAUL, WHOSE NAME WAS SHIMEI, THE SON OF GERA: HE CAME FORTH, AND CURSED STILL AS HE CAME. AND HE CAST STONES AT DAVID, AND AT ALL THE SERVANTS OF KING DAVID: AND ALL THE PEOPLE AND ALL THE MIGHTY MEN WERE ON HIS RIGHT HAND AND ON HIS LEFT. . . . . AND DAVID SAID TO ABISHAI, AND TO ALL HIS SERVANTS, BEHOLD, MY SON, WHICH CAME FORTH OF MY BOWELS, SEEKETH MY LIFE: HOW MUCH MORE NOW MAY THIS BENJAMITE DO IT? LET HIM ALONE, AND LET HIM CURSE; FOR THE LORD HATH BIDDEN HIM. IT MAY BE THAT THE LORD WILL LOOK ON MINE AFFLICTION, AND THAT THE LORD WILL REQUITE ME GOOD FOR HIS CURSING THIS DAY. . . . . AND THE KING, AND ALL THE PEOPLE THAT WERE WITH HIM, CAME WEARY, AND REFRESHED THEMSELVES THERE."—2 SAM. XVI. 5, 6, 11, 12, 14.

2 SAM. XV. 1–31.
2 SAM. XVI. 5–15.

THE ROYAL FLIGHT ACROSS THE MOUNT.

THE most sacred and impressive memorials of the Mount, as we have noted in the preceding pages, are to be found in the evangelical narrative, and associated with the words and work of the Divine Redeemer. In the truest sense of the term, the Memories of Olivet are the Memories of Jesus. Its rocks, its footpaths, its little dells and wadys and olive groves, are, above all, fragrant with "the name which is above every name." Its green slopes are a sacred scroll —an illuminated missal—glowing with the records of His presence and power—His pleadings and His tears. The Old Testament, however, is far from being either silent or devoid of interest regarding a locality, which was to receive its loftiest and truest consecration at a later and brighter day: and the passages indicated at the head of this chapter, form alike the earliest and the most remarkable of these "Memories" which preceded the Gospel Era.

Few single incidents indeed in Old Testament story, are so vividly photographed in all their minute details as that which we are now to consider. Touching must have been the scene here unfolded. The uncrowned and unsandalled King, with head covered and eyes dim with tears, pursuing his way along the precipitous road "by the ascent of the Olives"* to the country of exile whence he might

* It may be noted that the term "Mount" in this verse is inserted by our translators. It is not in the original.

never return: the wailing crowd, like a long funeral procession, their heads similarly muffled,* (for "the whole land wept"), tracking his steps.

"Put not your trust in Princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of." To all outward appearance, the Minstrel King of Judah was securely seated on his Throne. Though a man of war from his youth, his sword was sheathed, his empire consolidated, his capital strengthened and beautified;—peace seemed to be within its walls and prosperity within its palaces. But a storm was gathering, and the noblest vessel on that surging sea is driven on the rocks! Sundry political causes, on which we need not now enter, may have tended to foster and stimulate the national disaffection. Chiefly among these, may be noted, the impolitic appointment of mercenaries for the Royal Body-guard—"Cherethites, Perethites, and Gittites, six hundred men, which came after him from Gath," (2 Sam. xv. 18.) It is not difficult, indeed, to seek David's personal reasons for this enlistment of foreign soldiers and counsellors. There is no doubt that at this period of the monarchy his popularity was on the wane. Since the commission of the great crime of his life, his whole character as a ruler seems to have deteriorated. That crime

* Probably with the loose cloak ('abaya) as we have seen it worn by the weeping Jews who gather on Fridays at the "wailing wall" of their old Jerusalem Temple. Muffled in these, to secure against intrusion on their grief, and with their heads pressed against them, they kiss the stones and intone their plaintive lament. The entire shrouding of the head formed the Jewish symbol of grief, as we see too in David's subsequent "covering of his face" in his touching lament for Absalom, (2 Sam. xix. 4.)

had recoiled terribly on its perpetrator. He secluded himself more from his subjects. He was deeply conscious that he had justly forfeited, at least the former enthusiastic ardour of their love and loyalty. He was no longer either physically or morally the hero he once was. Losing his own self-respect and self-confidence, he lost confidence in the attachment of his old and trusted advisers, and with a short-sighted policy availed himself of extraneous aid. Add to this—some have inferred, from references in several of the Psalms, that at this period he had become the victim of bodily ailment; an ailment so severe, as to prevent him, for the time, discharging indispensable public duties; more especially that, which has ever possessed a peculiar charm in the eyes of Orientals, seating himself day by day by the City Gate—the arbiter in disputes, and the redressor of wrongs. The unscrupulous Absalom avails himself of the tempting opportunity—the favouring conjunction of circumstances—to ingratiate himself with the populace and gratify his unnatural ambition. His gaudily-caparisoned horses and chariot; his noble mien and kingly countenance; his indefatigable attendance at early morn to hear causes of debate and controversy; his artful reflections and insinuations regarding the King's absence and neglect to appoint a deputy; at the same time with bold effrontery asserting his own pretensions, "Oh that I were made a Judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me and I would do him justice;"—all this kingcraft or princecraft was only too successful with a people fond of outward glitter and show, and possessing the frequent national characteristic of fickleness and love of change. The Royal conspirator "stole the

hearts of the men of Israel." The train was only too successfully laid, and all that had to be done was to apply the torch. It must have been, need we say, to the aged Father, the trial of all trials, that the arrow which pierced him was one feathered from his own bosom,—that it was the child of his affections, his favourite son—around whose future his too fond heart had weaved visions of bright hope, whose gallant mien had won a nation's love—it was he who was the fomenter of the rebellion, and the plotter of his parent's ruin,—who had put forth his hand to embitter his old age, and bring down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave!

Let those who know what it is to mourn the early death of loved ones,—who have gathered around the grave of household treasures and wept over lives of usefulness and promise and love prematurely nipped in the bud,—let such come and learn from the Old King of Judah, to thank God that, by these early removals, He may have spared tears and anguish far more bitter, for they may have been "taken from the evil to come." How willingly would that smitten monarch have exchanged places with you,—taken your aching heart, with its hallowed memories and sublime solaces,—to be freed from woes and sorrows too deep for utterance or for tears. He, too, had once lost a child; and deep and intense was his grief, when the wavelets of that fragile life were ebbing,—when for seven whole days and nights he lay prostrate on the ground, importunate that it might be spared. But what was this? What this sudden and early drying-up of a little well-spring of joy within his Palace? dust in the balance compared to the

woe of woes that was now crushing him to the earth. Truly we may say, in the well-known words of an old writer, "Better David's dead child than his living Absalom."

But to return to the narrative. What resolution in the present emergency must the King adopt? His life as well as his throne is in peril: the insurrection is spreading: the disorganisation is complete: the artifices of Absalom have triumphed. Not a moment is to be lost. The usurper is mustering his renegade force at Hebron; another day will find him marching on the Capital. David, from his Palace windows, looks out on his loved city, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." What will he not do to save it from pillage and mutilation? If he remain and attempt a defence, as his old indomitable courage would perhaps have dictated, a fierce struggle must ensue that may deluge its streets with blood. He must leave it instantly. "Arise," he says, "let us flee."

It must have been yet early morning, the sun had just risen over the sombre hills of Moab, and Olivet was casting its shadows athwart the Valley of the Kedron, when he gathered his faithful adherents around him. Himself barefoot, (another token of grief)—the centre figure of a vast concourse—he prepares to cross "the brook," and to wend along the same bridle-path which a Greater than he often traversed in a future age. The first halt is by a solitary Olive-tree which marked the commencement of the toilsome road leading across the Mount by the way of the wilderness.* At this spot all the household troops, including the Philis-

* *See* Septuagint Version, (2 Sam. xv. 18.)

tine body-guard and the six hundred retainers, defiled before the King. The flight was in one sense precipitate, but yet, in keeping with David's old martial habits, an order of march was formed and preserved. Humbling and mournful —nay, rather we should say, noble and impressive procession! Never is David more worthy of admiration than in his hour of adversity,—never truly greater is this Cedar of God than when wrestling with the storm. His keenness of temperament might have roused far other emotions. If he had been naturally reserved, stolid, phlegmatic, we should not have wondered to see him mount the steeps of Olivet in sullen silence, submitting passively to his fate. But with these his feelings so finely set,—cut to the quick with the imputation of unmerited wrong (for "reproach," he tells us, had "broken his heart*") could we have wondered if, stung to madness—chafed like a lioness robbed of her whelps—we had witnessed, in this season of sudden reverse, uncontrollable irritation,—some outburst of vehement rage,—some vow of fierce revenge. How different! In tearful emotion, indeed, but with no repining on his lips, he turns his back on his capital, and pursues his way. Even when Shimei comes forth at Bahurim, on the descent of the Mount, scrambling along the top of the cliff with his storm of curses, and hurling his stones and missiles, the expression of the long-suppressed hatred of the fallen family of Saul; and when Abishai—a representative of the spirit of the world—would at once stop the villain's mouth with his sword, "I pray thee, let me go over and take off his head," David says, No! "let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." "My son

* Ps. lxix. 20.

which cometh forth of my bowels seeketh my life;" nothing will sting me after this: no wave can buffet me after this. "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because *Thou* didst it!"* Let none say, David was a veteran in trial,—that his finer and more sensitive feelings were now blunted,—that he made a virtue of necessity, and submitted with cold stoical endurance to the stern fortunes of war. Nay, we see the saint of God, the resigned believer,—his soul even as a weaned child,—"Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed," remaining calm and unmoved, like a rock in the midst of the surge,—cherishing the spirit of an older and kindred sufferer, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good," (1 Sam. iii. 18.)

At the commencement of his retreat—just as he has crossed the Kedron, and is beginning the ascent of *Olivet* —there are two incidents which we are called to note. The first illustrates the tender considerateness and unselfishness of David's character. Amid the body-guard of Philistines, his eye falls on Ittai of Gath. David knew well, at a crisis like this, the incalculable value of the experience and valour of such a soldier,—what a loss his shattered cause would sustain by the departure of this chief and his six hundred veterans. But why should this brave man share the disasters of a kingdom in which he was a stranger and foreigner? The fallen monarch importunes him to march with his Gittite band back to his own fron-

* Ps. xxxix. 1-9.

tiers, and not to imperil his life and theirs with a desperate cause. Ittai, however, (compared as he has been to the Peter of a future age, along with a nobler guard who surrounded their Master nigh the same spot,) testifies the strength of his attachment by refusing to leave the royal presence, and chivalrously avowing his resolution to follow him to prison and to death! Again, we have to mark a sudden stop. The procession pauses. In the motley crowd of soldiers and citizens, we see a group attired in holy vestments. In the panic of the hour, Zadok and Abiathar, with the officiating Levites,—faithful to their King, and, as they imagined, to their God;—had rescued the sacred symbol from the tabernacle in Zion, and borne it on their shoulders to the place where they knew the Royal fugitive was. Happy omen! we are naturally led to say. The ark of God is with the exiles;—the Palladium of their nation, the sacred pledge of ultimate deliverance and victory. They may well cheer their hearts and dry their tears: Jehovah will bless the house of David, as He did that of Obededom, "for the ark's sake." The furious anarchists who have sided with Absalom, when they march into Jerusalem and discover the removal, will pronounce that the glory of the city has, with it, departed. Its presence with David will rally all waverers. He has only to hasten across Jordan and make known that the symbol of ancestral glory is there, and thousands will give their adhesion to his cause: its name and prestige, more than sword or buckler or shields of mighty men, will win back the hearts of his disaffected subjects. Wherever the first great feast—be it Passover, or Pentecost, or Tabernacles, is held—thither will "the tribes go up, the tribes of

the Lord, to the *Testimony of Israel* to give thanks to the name of the Lord." * Nay more, as he hastens to Jordan by way of Jericho, may he not bear in memory the marvels associated, at both, with that consecrated shrine? and now, as its custodier, may he not ask, "Is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save?" In one word, will it not prove to him and his, like the Pillar of Fire of old,—reflecting brightness on their cause, and spreading darkness and gloom over the camp of the adversary?

Different altogether is David's feeling and determination and royal command: "The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city!"

The noblest, purest, most disinterested motives, doubtless, dictated this decision. He cherished no superstitious idea that the retention of the Ark would in any way act as a talisman or charm. He may perhaps reverently have thought that it would be unbecoming and unseemly to risk this holy treasure in the hour of precipitate retreat. But the will of Jehovah, here, as at other times, doubtless decided him. "In *Judah* is God known. . . . In *Salem* also is his tabernacle." † David will not attempt to purchase peace and restoration by an unrighteous expedient, or by following devisive courses. God (the God who dwelt between the Cherubim) had said of *Jerusalem*, "*This* is my rest." Neither priest nor king has a right to propose a transference without divine authority and sanction, and to pillage the Holy City of that which gave it, by distinctive pre-eminence, the name of "The Mountain of Holiness." If he had been a time-server,—guided by worldly artifice,

* Ps. cxxii. 4. † Ps. lxxvi. 12.

policy, base expediency,—if he had made his religion a mere cloak to cover and expedite his schemes of aggrandisement,—he would joyfully have hailed the presence of the sacred chest. He would have said, 'By all means keep it. Abandon what else you may. Let my Palace treasures go; the accumulated silver and gold for my projected Temple. Let my best soldiers, if they please, desert my ranks. Let the counsel of Ahithophel, my most sagacious adviser, be given to the enemy. But, at all hazards, retain the Theocratic symbol. Its moral influence is worth half an army, half a kingdom. If my usurped Throne can be re-purchased on no other terms, the Ark of God will do it: I shall hold it out as the price of unconditional surrender!' David, however, was above all such unrighteous diplomacy. His command was imperative; and before he advances another step, he sees Zadok and Abiathar on their way back, with the hallowed burden, to the tabernacle on Zion.

Besides, the veteran saint took a far higher view of the whole matter. If this expulsion from his throne and kingdom had been *man's* doing,—the result of uncontrolled human passion or wayward caprice, he might have altered his tactics;—he might have stooped to unworthy compliances, and willingly assented to the expedient worldly wisdom suggested. But it was very different. "It is the Lord!" "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it and His habitation, but if He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him." Ah, doubtless at that moment (unknown to those around) there

was a silent voice, more terrible than Shimei's taunts and imprecations, speaking to the sorrowing exile. Nathan's solemn words must have been ringing their echoes of judgment in his ear. The blood of the murdered Uriah, and the foul guilt which followed, must have hung like a cloud of vengeance over his head. Even the name and place of the human agents in the plot, were not without their retributive significancy. "The sword" that was "never to depart from his house" was now unsheathed; and it was the hand of his own child that was the first to draw it from its scabbard. The defection of Ahithophel—the wisest and wiliest of the political leaders—and his confederacy with Absalom, had its explanation in the family disgrace involved in the crime of his grand-daughter Bathsheba; while the very stones and dust hurled by Shimei, would remind the great wrong-doer of the peculiar death, which, by the laws of his country his crimson guilt entailed, and which doubtless his regal position had alone averted. Conscience was writing bitter things against him. Others, his still confiding subjects, may have wondered at this sudden reverse of fortune; but he himself wondered not. He had often perhaps had a gloomy presentiment of the present hour. He had rather reason to marvel why his God had so long delayed the merited retribution. The Being he had offended was only showing him, "by terrible things in righteousness," that He was "not a man that He should lie." As the aged monarch sped him up these slopes;—when he looked on his own sackcloth attire, and listened to the loud wail of his people waking every echo of the mountain,—when he looked behind him on the city and palace that had been the scene of his

aggravated crime,—the awful monition must, like a funeral bell, have rung in his ears,—"BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT!" 'Talk not,' he seems to say, 'of retaining the Ark. Restore it to its own holy rest. If the God who is now judging righteous judgment, has resolved to bring me back, He will do it independently of any such outward instrumentality. I am in His hands. I will not stoop to unworthy strategy, or the arts of base expediency. I *may* see my loved Jerusalem once more. Oft has He restored me in times past, and led me in the paths of righteousness; and He can do so still; He may yet turn my mourning into dancing,—take off my sackcloth and gird me with gladness;—I may yet praise Him on the loud cymbal and psaltery. On the other hand, if He has forgotten me; if He has resolved to leave me to perish in exile;—I deserve it all, and will submit to it all. If I am to cross that Jordan to my grave,—if I am left as a desolate panting hart amid the mountains of Gilead, sighing in vain for the brooks of Zion, I *shall* not, I *dare* not murmur. My punishment may be greater than I can bear, but it is not greater than I deserve. He who "stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people," may in His own time utter the mandate, "Peace, be still." "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause and execute judgment for me!"' *

Onward the mournful cavalcade sweeps, from the top of the hill, down the undulating slopes, and across the wild, jagged limestone rocks, with the hills of Moab and Gilead bound-

* Micah vii. 9.

ing the horizon. Jerusalem, with all its hallowed memories and princely splendours, is exchanged for "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." *

In gathering a few practical lessons from this '*Olivet Memory*,' let us learn, *The unsatisfactory nature of all earthly things.* This, we find, is the topic of David's special musing in that Psalm, (xxxix.) which was evidently penned along with others, on a retrospect of the mournful incidents of his flight, "Surely every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: Surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them." Here was the result of all this great man's wars and campaigns, all his diplomacy and statesmanship, all his efforts for the consolidation of his empire, the beautifying of his capital, the prosperity of his people. "All was *vanity.*" In one brief hour the dream had vanished. It was a *pantomime*—"a vain show." He had been "heaping up riches," accumulating costly materials in his palace: they were to be "gathered" by an ungrateful son, and to fall into the hands of base unscrupulous partizans. What a requital for his toil! What a mockery of the pageantry of the past, and of the bright hopes he had indulged for the future! He could adopt the epitaph, over this mimicry of true life, written in a later age,—"The fashion" (or as that word means, 'the shifting *drama*') "of this world passeth away." †

* Ps. lxii. 2. This Psalm has been, by tradition, assigned to this eventful day.

† 1 Cor. vii. 31.

And was David's case a singular or exceptional one? Alas! no. Every day makes additional disclosures of the "vain show;" and writes the old "sum of the whole matter," —"This also is vanity." A man "heaping up riches:"— but it is a golden pyramid, erected over his own dead and ruined hopes.

One man has toiled a whole lifetime. The coveted riches have come at last;—houses and lands and equipage and luxury—all is realised. But, it is "a vain show." Disease unexpectedly supervenes: he has no health, no heart to enjoy them: the riches are there, but the zest is gone! Another has toiled with equal success. He had a beloved child, all worthy of inheriting his wealth; but, at the hour he least dreamt of, the footfall of the dread messenger was heard at the door, and the object of his fondest anticipations is borne away to the last home! What to him now are the long, toiling, fretting years of the past? His gold is poor base alloy;—that amassed fortune passes to some unknown or distant relative in whom he feels no interest. It is again "the vain show;"—the "castle of fairy frost-work" which rises in a night and perishes with the morning sun;—"he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," (Ps. xxxix. 6.) Yes! there are many broken and sad hearts that will be ready to subscribe this experience as their own;—who, in the memory of frustrated hopes, disappointed schemes, forfeited friendships, sorrowful bereavements, will tell that the world is not the gay and gladsome and happy thing many take it for. Would that, in the midst of this constant experience of its vanity and unsatisfactoriness, we might adopt David's words in that same Psalm as our

habitual motto;—they would temper the joys of prosperity, they would reconcile to the bitterness of adversity, by keeping us mindful that this changeful, deceitful earth is *not* our home:—"I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were!"

Let us learn next, from the example of the royal fugitive, the lesson of *Resignation under affliction, patience under injuries, and of humble, child-like reliance on God.* In the midst of dark providences, let us seek to have no wish or will of our own; no reflections or surmises on the Divine faithfulness. Some may be disposed to think, that, even in the eyes of David, there might have been room for such repinings, and that the sincerity of his repentance, years before, might have exempted him from present judgment. He might have thought so himself. 'It is hard for me,' might have been his inward reflection, if not the utterance of his lips, 'to encounter this sweeping blast in my old age. After a life of devotion to the God of Israel; after seeking to discharge, as faithfully as I could, my duties as His anointed servant, the king of His covenant people, and the minstrel of His Church,—hard it is to have the harp snatched from my hand, or left hanging tuneless and mute in my Cedar-palace, and to be driven an exile and wanderer on alien soil!' But no such reasoning escapes his lips. Of all the Psalms he ever sung, this life-Psalm was one of the grandest;—when he climbs Mount Olivet, weeping and barefoot, yet so humble, unselfish, generous, submissive, resigned,—"not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrari-

wise blessing." Would that we had ever such a heart in us in the midst of afflictions, unmerited taunts, unkind insinuations! When God in a moment overturns our cherished schemes, and sends us forth, barefoot and weeping, across the mount of trial; or when some unkind and ungenerous human persecutor—some slanderer like Shimei—comes forth with malicious and railing accusations, launching missiles "more cruel than spears and arrows, their tongue a sharp sword,"—be it ours to feel that all is ordered;—even the wrath of man, the tongue of calumny,—"Let him curse on, for the Lord hath bidden him." 'I will look high above all human instruments,—"The wicked which are thy sword, the men of the world which are thy hand." O God! here am I, do to me as seemeth good to Thee: take me, use me for Thy glory. I wish not to evade any cross or suffering. The lot may be a bitter one, cast into the lap, "but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."'

And if the example of David teach us Resignation for the present, let it teach us also *Trust for the future.* "If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord," says he, "he will bring me again." He felt the future was not in his own hands, but in the hands of Him who had gathered these storm-clouds round his head. The same who gathered them, could, by a word, disperse them. "It may be, that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." He trusted to better times. He seemed to say, in the words of a royal descendant, when placed in similar circumstances of peril, with an host encamping against him, "We have no

might against this great multitude, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon *Thee!*" *

One recorded incident in this sudden flight is enough of itself, touchingly and beautifully to unfold to us the hidden inner life of this man of God. How calm that religious trust must have been, which, in the midst of his hurried retreat, prompts him at noon, when every moment was valuable, to pause at the altar on the top of the Mount and engage in worship.† Ah! it is easy enough in prosperity, when our circles are unbroken and our worldly hopes unblighted, to own God's hand;—to erect our altar and kindle our sacrifice, and raise our eucharistic song. But it is not so easy, when the hearth is swept and the home desolate, and the mount of trial, the "hill difficulty" has to be climbed:—it is not so easy then, amid the peltings of the storm, to kneel and utter words of faith and trust, and to say, as David did, in the spirit, if not in the language of the Psalm of his exile: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning

* 2 Chron. xx. 12.

† The expression in the original is "worshipped *God*," (not Jehovah,) as if it were one of the remaining "High Places"—the old sanctuaries of Elohim, like Bethel or Moreh. These altars were common on all the higher eminences of Palestine, and in many places have left their remains to this day. That here mentioned would seem, from the reference made in the text, to have been one to which David was in the habit of resorting. —See *Smith's Bible Dic. in loco.*

because of the oppression of the enemy? . . . . Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God," (Ps. xlii. 7, 8, 9, 11.) And the God he thus trusted, did not fail nor forsake him. A few weeks afterwards, that same Mount of Olives is crowded with a different throng. Its echoes are awoke with joyful songs of victory, as the old King is conducted back to his throne and palace, amid the hosannas of his people, who had come down to the Jordan to welcome him.

God's dealings have always some great end in view, and when the end is accomplished "He giveth his beloved rest."* Great surely is the comfort for us to know, with David, that the Lord "looks upon our afflictions;" that the troubles He sends are needed troubles; that He graciously and discriminately metes them out and apportions them;—as "a refiner of silver," watching until the process of purification be complete; and though He *does* and *will* cause us to pass (when He sees we require it) through the flames, He will not "make a full end" of us. The furnace is to purify and refine, not to destroy and consume. "If they break my statutes," says He, "and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes. *Nevertheless* my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail," (Ps. lxxxix. 31–33.) As He raised up unlooked-for comforts to the aged king in his hour of bitter adversity:—temporal refreshment, (2 Sam. xvi. 14,) and the better solace of generous and faithful friendships, destined long to survive the

* Ps. cxxvii. 2.

season of exile;—crowning all, with a safe return from beyond Jordan, and a triumphant entrance within the walls of his beloved Zion: so in the case of His tried people. For them, too, does He spread a table in the wilderness. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them." "I will open" "rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." * Thus does He cause them to sing of mercy in the midst of judgment; imparting when they most need it, new and undreamt-of consolations—strength in the hour of weakness, succour in the hour of danger, friends in the hour of loneliness, sympathy, human and Divine, in the hour of sorrow. Above all, whatever be their desert experiences and desert trials, bringing them at last, in safety, across the dark border-river into the Heavenly Zion—the new Jerusalem—where the wail of sadness, the dirge of crushed hopes and blighted or buried affections, shall never more be heard.

Oh! trust this faithful covenant-keeping God. Trust Him in exigencies. Take the words of this Royal sufferer in another of his Psalms, for your motto, in all time of your tribulation—"What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee!" Trust Him—even when, like David, you may have the sackcloth on your loins and the tear in your eye. "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, He will bring it to pass. He will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." † "The Lord is good: a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him." ‡

* Isaiah xli. 18. † Ps. xxxvii. 5, 6. ‡ Nahum i. 7.

III.

The Feast of Tabernacles.

"GO FORTH UNTO THE MOUNT, AND FETCH OLIVE BRANCHES, AND PINE BRANCHES, AND MYRTLE BRANCHES, AND PALM BRANCHES, AND BRANCHES OF THICK TREES, TO MAKE BOOTHS."—NEH. VIII. 15.

"IN THE LAST DAY, THAT GREAT DAY OF THE FEAST, JESUS STOOD AND CRIED, SAYING, IF ANY MAN THIRST, LET HIM COME UNTO ME, AND DRINK."—JOHN VII. 37.

"JESUS WENT UNTO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. AND EARLY IN THE MORNING HE CAME AGAIN INTO THE TEMPLE, AND ALL THE PEOPLE CAME UNTO HIM; AND HE SAT DOWN, AND TAUGHT THEM. . . . THEN SPAKE JESUS AGAIN UNTO THEM, SAYING, I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE."—JOHN VIII. 1, 2, 12.

LEV. XXIII. 39–43.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

ALTHOUGH the first of these verses relates to the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, it is manifest, from the context, that the proclamation "Go forth to the Mount," intimated the revival of an old and sacred anniversary,—the restoration of a venerated festival,—which, indeed, dated its true pedigree from the wilderness of Sinai, but which, like other things during the dismemberment of the kingdom at the time of the Babylonish captivity, had fallen into desuetude. We may, therefore, in point of chronological sequence, appropriately assign to *the Feast of Tabernacles* the next place in the OLIVET Memories.*

We believe it may without qualification be asserted, that, of all the joyous festivals in the old city of Jerusalem, the most joyous by far, was this annual celebration. It was the great holiday of the nation, at which people of all ranks and professions vied with one another in their demonstrations of gladness. From every village and city, from Dan to Beersheba, (as on the occasion of the other two principal anniversary feasts,) there poured forth jubilant multitudes to the city of Solemnities. It was the closing and crowning festival of the year. The whole land had yielded its increase. The harvest had been reaped by the sickle

* For several of the historical facts of this chapter, I am indebted to a full and interesting article in Smith's Bible Dictionary.

from the valleys and plains of Palestine, and stored away in the granary. The berries had been plucked or "shaken" from the silver-leaved olive, and the oil laid up in "baths." The palm had yielded its luscious dates. The vineyards on the terraced hills had resigned their purple clusters, and been trodden in the wine-press. The juice of the grape had been deposited in cask, or leathern bottle, or ample *amphora*. In one word, the vast and varied produce of another season had been gathered in; and, with one accord, the whole Hebrew nation, under a mellow October sky, hastened to their Temple-courts—the nation's central Sanctuary—with votive offerings and tributes of thanksgiving to Him who had "crowned the year with His goodness" and made all its "paths drop fatness." Hence a synonyme for the Feast of Tabernacles was "the *Feast of Ingathering*." It was a grand national harvest-home, in which they sought to combine exuberant natural joy with the solemnities of a holy convocation.

Independently too of the crowds that thronged street and suburb, Jerusalem herself was arrayed in gayest holiday attire. All the woods in the vicinity were laid under contribution. But on the 14th day of the month Tisri, or seventh month, the axes were heard to resound specially, among the thickets and groves which then covered the MOUNT of OLIVES. Palm and citron, vine and olive, pine and myrtle and weeping-willow, were stript of their branches; and next morning at daybreak, when the rising sun looked down from the heights of the Mount, lo! the city had been transmuted, as by the hand of an enchanter, into a mimic forest. The flat-terraced roofs of the houses

had, for the time being, been transformed into a congeries of arbours or booths. The courts of the Temple were studded with the same; and all along the narrow valley of the Kedron, climbing up the flanks of Olivet, temporary huts or tabernacles were reared for those whose numbers would not admit of their being accommodated in vacant ground within the walls. On the occurrence of the other great festivals, the Mount was crowded with tents of black goats' hair, brought along with their caravans, for the use of the Pilgrims during their sojourn in the Holy city. But on this occasion these were forbidden:—no covering, no architecture was permitted, save the primitive hut made of interlacing bough: "And ye shall take you on the first day, the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook," (Lev. xxiii. 40.) The minute and specific directions given, in regard to the construction of these, is remarkable. They were (according to a writer quoting from the *Mishna*) to be separate and apart;—to be dependant for support on no adjoining wall or building;—even the shade of a tree rendered the erection of a booth underneath inadmissible;—and whatever might be the inclemency of the weather, no oil-skin or cloth was permitted to form part of the canopy. Nor was there any respect of persons in the celebration: from king and prince to the humblest citizen, all were, for the sacred week, dwellers within these fragile leafy walls. It must have seemed as if the ruthless hand of some conqueror had sacked and gutted house and palace, hall and temple in the adjoining city, and a homeless population had been driven, by stern necessity, to endure the extremities of

camp life,—taking the shaggy vestments with which nature had clad the 'mountains round about Jerusalem' as a temporary shelter and screen from the fiery sun by day and drenching dews by night. The joyous accents, however, which were heard rising, gave evidence that it was no harsh or coercive enactment which had driven to these leafy abodes—these wooded Tabernacles. The moving masses seen swarming in every direction, bore in their hands a token of rejoicing. For seven whole days, each Hebrew, young and old, clad in festive attire, carried in his left hand some fruit of the citron, and in his right a bunch, or green *bouquet*, composed of palm, entwined with willow and myrtle and fastened with gold and silver strings.* The procession swept in a continuous stream through the Temple-courts; as they passed the altar, the conspicuous palm-branches were waved in the air, and "HOSANNAH! *Save! we beseech Thee!*" was shouted by the exulting crowd. At intervals—twice each hour—the trumpets of the Temple sounded to inspire and stimulate the national joy.

At the time of the morning sacrifice, on each successive day,† one of the most interesting incidents in connexion with the festival took place. The altar of burnt-offering was wreathed with sprigs of willow; and as the partitioned victim was laid upon it, a chorus of voices was heard approaching through the water-gate from the southern slope

* Horne's Introduction.

† We picture the celebration as it took place at the close of the Jewish dispensation; and the Rabbinical writings may be accepted as sufficiently trustworthy guides in the description of a purely historical occurrence.

of Mount Moriah. The procession was headed by a priest, bearing in his hand a golden ewer or pitcher from the pool of Siloam. His appearance on the flight of steps was greeted by a blast of the Temple trumpets, also by the shout of the assembled crowd, re-echoing the words of the great Prophet, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." * Reverently he ascended the steps; and into one of two silver basins, adjoining the altar on its west side, he poured the contents of the flagon. Into the other he emptied a quantity of wine,—both of which were conveyed by separate pipes or conduits to the Kedron below. An acclamation of joy again burst forth; and as the smoke of the morning sacrifice arose, an appointed choir of musicians sang in full chorus the great Hallel. It is specially mentioned by the Rabbins, that at different parts (particularly of their favourite 118th Psalm) † they waved in triumph their branches of palm. They did so at ver. 1, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever." Again at ver. 25, "Hosannah! Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord. O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity." Again at ver. 29, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." The whole concluded with the offering of fresh sacrifices and songs of praise.

Nor did the shades of evening terminate the celebrations; —all night long the jubilant festival continued, and the still air was melodious with these grand choral symphonies. Impressive must this midnight scene have been to witness. In the centre of one of the Temple-courts, two colossal

* Isa. xii. 3. † *See* Thrupp on Psalms, *in loco.*

golden candlesticks or candelabra were erected. Immediately after the offering of the evening sacrifice, these were lighted, and the wooded dells and slopes of OLIVET on the one hand, and the streets of Jerusalem on the other, were brilliant with the glare. These two gigantic Illuminators did not stand alone. The bunch of flowers carried by day, was now, in the case of many, exchanged for torches and flambeaux; a band of Levites, seated on the fifteen steps leading to the court, sang or chanted the "Songs of degrees," extending from the 120th to the 134th Psalms inclusive. We can barely form an idea of the magnificence of this scene, distinctively and by pre-eminence called, in the Rabbinical books, "THE Festival." The exuberant, and, in later years, the almost extravagant, if not unwarrantable joy which attended it, was in strange contrast with the holy celebration which, by five days, it was preceded,—the *Day of Atonement*,—which is described as a day of profound humiliation—a day "for a man afflicting his soul." As it was said of the latter in a Jewish proverb, "A man had never seen sorrow who never saw the sorrow of that day," so was there a corresponding proverbial saying, "He who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water of Siloam, has never seen rejoicing in his life."

And it is an interesting thing surely for us to remember, that our blessed and adorable Lord witnessed these strange and jubilant festivities,—that His eye fell on the cluster of leafy encampments on OLIVET,—ay, and that His ear heard those words, whose profound meaning was unknown to those who uttered them, "HOSANNAH! Save now!" (or, "Come, Saviour!") What *were* these? but ten thousand prayers for

the advent of Him who, though they knew Him not, was standing in their midst! We infer, from what is said in the 7th chapter of St John, that He was present in the crowd at that exciting moment of the day's festive joy, when the water of Siloam was being carried in the golden goblet, and that He made touching use of the dumb symbol to proclaim His own everlasting gospel:—"In the last day, that great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The Jews interpreted (and, as we shall presently see, they interpreted rightly) the primary meaning of the typical figure to be, a commemoration of the fetching of the water from the Rock in the Sinai desert. But our blessed Saviour combines the two types; 'I,' says He, 'am that Rock! I am that living water. Your fathers drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, but that Rock was Myself.' Oh, as His loving omniscient eye looked around, that moment, on the festive throng—apparently all outward joy—He could penetrate deeper. He saw, doubtless, that underneath that holiday attire there was many a trembling agitated spirit. There were many with these bouquets, (types of mimic mirth in their hands,) whose hopes were withered flowers. There were many parched souls seeking to quench their thirst at a deeper than earthly fountain or cistern. The golden goblet, with the water from Siloam's pool, gives Him an appropriate text. He had, a short time previously, pointed a lone spirit at the well of Jacob to the same type, and made it discourse of nobler verities,—"Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." Now He has a vaster audience:—now, instead of one Samaritan

woman, He has a whole temple-crowd, to whom, if we may paraphrase His words, He addresses the earnest invitation and remonstrance,—'Israel! Children of Zion! this of yours is a false and counterfeit joy. If this festival-mirth is all your happiness, then are you chasing shadows. That Siloam water, though in golden goblet, is the type of all earthly joy: it is from a broken cistern, and, spilt upon the ground, it cannot be gathered again: it returns to its earth, or is borne away and commingled in the waters of that dark murmuring brook below. But look to *Me!*—turn to *Me*, "The fountain of living waters."' "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink!"*

Nor was this all. We have again to notice, how our blessed Lord in His teachings often makes selection of outward passing events and scenes to engraft upon them great spiritual lessons. He continued that same discourse, recorded in John vii., early on the following morning. He came at break of day to the Temple-courts, just as, we may imagine, the two colossal lights were being extinguished, or as the sun, climbing above the mountains of Moab, was quenching them with his superior beams and gilding the Temple summit with a coronal of glory. As the *Water* suggested a text for the one day, so do these extinguished and waning *Lights* for the following. Amid the blare of trumpets and the gleam of flambeaux, He saw that there were many anxious souls, groping after gladder sounds and truer light than any mere gorgeous ceremonial could impart. 'Behold Me!' He seems again to say to the listening multitudes,—"'I am the LIGHT OF THE WORLD.'

* See Stier's "Words of the Lord Jesus," *in loco*.

Your typical dispensation is passing away. As that natural sun is dimming with his lustre these artificial Temple lights, so do I, the true Sun of Righteousness, quench, in the brightness of my rising, this now obsolete and shadowy ritual;—all lesser glories are to be lost and extinguished in the glory which excelleth Look to ME as the Light and Illuminator of your darkened souls. The darkness is past and the true Light now shineth!" "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the LIGHT of the Lord."

Although we have so far anticipated, this MEMORY OF OLIVET, with these leafy arbours studding its slopes, would not be complete, without adverting, with greater definiteness, to the more special purposes which the Feast of Tabernacles was designed to subserve.

I. Its main design, as we have seen, was *a thanksgiving for the concluded Harvest.*

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine. . . . Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands; therefore thou shalt surely rejoice," (Deut. xvi. 13.) In connexion with this Eucharistic or Thanksgiving-festival for the bounties of outer nature, it is very striking to note, that there were vastly more bloody sacrifices offered at *it*, than at any of the other similar holy convocations. "Ye shall offer a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of

a sweet savour unto the Lord; thirteen young bullocks."* If we follow the detailed narrative in this same chapter, we shall find that no less than seventy bullocks were sacrificed in the course of the week. The greater number were offered the first day, the numbers diminishing by *one*, each successive day, till, on the seventh, they were reduced to *seven*. Besides these, there was, each day, an undiminished offering of two rams, fourteen lambs, and a kid for a sin-offering. What do these rivers of blood in connexion with a Harvest thanksgiving teach us? Is it not this great truth, that even for the bounties of daily providence (the very fruits of the earth) we are indebted to *the cross of Calvary?*—that when the golden corn is reaped by the sickle and gathered into barns—God "preparing," from nature's ample storehouses, "of His goodness for the poor"—it is for us to bring Him, not like Cain, a deist-offering of the fruits of the ground, but, rather, like Abel, of the firstlings of the flock:—to own that for these, as well as mightier boons and mercies, we are indebted to "the blood of sprinkling"—that blood without which, this bounteous earth could not have survived the Fall one hour;—without which, no harvests could have waved or seasons revolved. It is delightful thus, for the true believer, to connect all outward worldly blessings with the atonement of his dear Lord; to see the very fields of harvest—the shocks of yellow corn, as they sway in the autumn breeze—doing obeisance to a Greater than the material sun which has matured and ripened them, and in their dumb inarticulate language, taking up the old Jewish festive anthem, 'Hosannah! Hosannah! blessed is He who came to save!"

* Num. xxix. 13, 16.

Moreover, amid all these bloody offerings, it is striking to see how great and universal was the *joy*. It seems at first a singular combination—this aggregate of sacrifice—along with such an outburst and demonstration of gladness! But is there not a great truth underlying the coincidence? Is there not the greatest, the truest joy in the heart that looks most intently and undividedly on Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"? Is it not from *His* all-sufficient sacrifice we have our lips tuned to their loftiest themes of praise? It is when the live coal of pardon—the pledge of forgiveness, taken from the altar of atonement—touches our lips, that we can most joyfully wave the palm-branch of triumph, and sing, "Hosannah! blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosannah in the highest!"

The Jew held his feast of ingathering specially with reference to the gathered fruits of the earth. But we need not confine it to this. Whatever be our ingatherings or increase, let God have the glory of them. Let us joy before *Him*, according to this joy of the Feast of harvest. We ought surely, ever and anon, personally and as households, to keep our 'Feast of tabernacles.' "The voice of rejoicing and salvation" should be "in the tabernacles of the righteous." * When the Lord is giving any fresh tokens of His favour,—pouring into the lap the horn of plenty,—vouchsafing unexpected successes in business, worldly advancements, domestic and family blessings,—or even no more than the continuance of ordinary and everyday mercies, giving "neither poverty nor riches," but feeding us with "food convenient for us,"—we may well mark out our stakes, erect our booth, and sing our grateful anthem,

* Psalm cxviii. 15.

—the Hallelujah of rejoicing hearts,—"*O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!*"

A second object of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, was *to commemorate the Pilgrim life of their Fathers in the wilderness.* "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt," (Lev. xxiii. 42, 43.)

The occasion was thus specially designed to call to vivid remembrance, by a striking outward sacramental symbol, alike the deliverance of their fathers from the bondage of Egypt, and their remarkable and miraculous preservation, during their journeyings, through "the great and terrible wilderness." The night of the Exodus was, in one sense, their birthday as a nation, and we do not wonder that in various ways, and at various times, they were appointed to call it into grateful remembrance. What could more powerfully and pictorially commemorate the breaking of the tyrant's yoke and the forty years' wandering, than resolving the whole nation, for seven days, into a temporary encampment? The palm branches are the first specifically mentioned among "the goodly trees," and they occupied the most prominent part in the festival;—this appropriately so, as the tree most consecrated to their remembrance, in connexion with the wilderness and its scanty groves of Palm. The two great and most impressive incidents, already noted in the celebration of the Feast, were significant memorials of the Divine power and presence manifested in the Desert. The water fetched

from the pool of Siloam was doubtless intended, primarily, to remind them of the stream from the Rock at Meribah. The colossal candelabra lights—illuminating the city and its environs—may we not take as designed to recall, with equal impressiveness, the Pillar of Fire which lit the camp of Israel and the adjoining desert with lurid grandeur? How forcibly would they have thus brought to remembrance the dependence of their Fathers on their covenant God—that God who had given them the cloud by day and the flaming column by night—manna from heaven, (the harvest of the desert,) and water from the flinty Rock!

May *we* not well have such a Feast of Tabernacles,—a joyous commemoration of God's *spiritual* mercies? We have already spoken of the Hebrew Festival as a Eucharistic feast for temporal bounties. But have *we* no Egypt-life in our own experience;—no chain of the oppressor that has been broken,—no Red Sea that has been crossed,—no manna, no bread of life on which we have been fed,—no living streams of grace that have refreshed our fainting souls,—no cloud of shelter from the heat of prosperity,—no fiery pillar to light up the dark night of adversity? Yes! many of us, we trust, can commemorate more glorious blessings than golden sheaves and stored barns, and can say, with the Psalmist, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased," (Ps. iv. 7.) Is it not well also that, like Israel, we can commemorate ever and anon our Pilgrim condition?—that, by solemn and impressive warnings of Providence, by the recurrence of touching anniversaries or stated sacramental seasons, we can vividly recall the truth so apt to be dimmed or ignored

amid the world's engrossments,—that here "we have no continuing city,"—that earth is often, at the best, but a camp-life, made up of withering boughs—dying, fading, perishing—green to-day, shrivelled to-morrow,—the glaring torch and flambeaux of the night, lying, at dawn of morn, a piece of charred and blackened ashes:—the lights put out—the gay and festive scene over and gone! "The fashion of this world passeth away!"

Another object of this Feast, so intimately associated with the Mount and its olive branches, was *to celebrate by a public thanksgiving the settlement of Israel in the land of Canaan.*

Perhaps this was more peculiarly symbolised in the eighth day, which had its own special appointments, and was called "a day of holy convocation." In the morning, the booths were taken down, and as many as had houses returned to them. Appropriate offerings were appointed for these concluding hours of the festival—viz., a bullock, a ram, seven lambs, and a goat for a sin-offering.* The festivities of the long season were thus closed by the Hebrews within their own dwellings. The last notes of their rejoicing died away—not in the temporary booth, but in the permanent home, where was deposited the stored-up corn and wine and oil.

And can *we* not, in a loftier sense, participate here too, in the joy of the old Israelite with reference to settlement and rest in a better Canaan,—the rest of grace now, and

* Num. xxix.; also Neh. viii. 18.

the prospective rest of glory hereafter;—looking forward to God's fulfilment of His own special promise by the mouth of Isaiah, "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places"? The temporary booth was an expressive type of the perishable body. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth: for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." But as we see the Jew, of old, dismantling his frail hut of intertwined branches, and returning, glad in heart, to his own home;—may we not take up our song,—the song of "homeward bound" Pilgrims to the Better Country—"We know that when this house (this hut) of our earthly tabernacle is dissolved (or taken down), we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," (2 Cor. v. 1.) The light of life, like these temple-flambeaux, may be extinguished;—but "there shall be no night *there*, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever." "The candle of the wicked shall be put out" in ignominious darkness; but "then shall the Righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!"

Reader, let this glorious thought of *rest*—abiding *rest* and everlasting *light* and *love* in the true Canaan, bear you up amid all the chequered experiences of the present. Here you may be called—and *are* doubtless called—out to the leafy tent. Through its openings, sigh and sweep the gusts of trial;—the drenching dews of the night-season besprinkle your pillow with tears. The very bouquet you carry in your

hand (though the palm, the type of joy, be predominant) is mingled with the funereal cypress* and the weeping-willow. But once within the true Canaan, and the palm will be all that remains. The willow-branch and the cypress will be cast for ever away—swept down by Jordan as you are crossing its rapid current: and when you reappear on the Heavenward side, it will be "*clothed with white robes, and* PALMS *in your hands.*" "After this," says John, "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," (Rev. vii. 9, 10.) And what will be the chief joy of that glorious world? It will be, as shadowed out in the words of Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, when, recalling, in his moments of ecstasy, the joy at the feast of tabernacles, he said, "Let us make three tabernacles," (or booths,) "one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." Yours will be the grand element in Peter's Transfiguration joy, only with an eternal meaning attached to his words, when he exclaimed, "*Master,*" (O blessed Jesus—*Master* and Friend,) "it is good for us to be here!" (Luke ix. 33.)

One sentence, in conclusion. Are there any whose eyes fall on these pages who, like the Jews of old in the Temple-courts, when that great Master was still on earth, are THIRSTING—yes, thirsting—for the living water which the world's poor broken cisterns can *never, never* afford? Does

* So the word rendered "pine" in the passage in Nehemiah, is supposed, by some qualified authorities, rather to mean.

Christ, as He looks down on these our earthly Temple-courts, see any such? He has the same unchanging words of welcome and encouragement to utter, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*" Thirsting! He who knows our frame, He who knows how expressive is the type in regard to the deeper and more aching wants of the spiritual nature, seems to love the symbol. At the well of Jacob, we have already noted, He employed it; at this impressive scene at the Temple He employed it; and when He is ending His inspired messages to man—sealing up the Vision and the prophecy—the last lingering accents which fall from His lips upon our ears, are these, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is ATHIRST come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely," (Rev. xxii. 17.) 'Lord! we come'—be it ours to reply!—'with joy we will draw water out of the wells of salvation!' We will keep the holy festival. Life shall henceforth, as well it may, be one continual feast of Tabernacles,—one continual thank-offering for unnumbered and unmerited mercies! And oh, in Thy mercy grant, that, pilgrims and strangers and sojourners in the earthly encampment, we may at last enter, through the blood-besprinkled gate of heaven, to keep the eternal feast,—where, thirsting now, we shall "hunger no more, neither THIRST any more,"—where we shall drink, not as now, even when mercies are greatest, from the restricted and scanty golden goblet of earth;—but having reached the divine perennial source, the Lamb shall lead us to the *Living* FOUNTAINS of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes!

IV.

Solomon's High Places on the Mount.

"FOR IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN SOLOMON WAS OLD, THAT HIS WIVES TURNED AWAY HIS HEART AFTER OTHER GODS: AND HIS HEART WAS NOT PERFECT WITH THE LORD HIS GOD, AS WAS THE HEART OF DAVID HIS FATHER. FOR SOLOMON WENT AFTER ASHTORETH THE GODDESS OF THE ZIDONIANS, AND AFTER MILCOM THE ABOMINATION OF THE AMMONITES. AND SOLOMON DID EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, AND WENT NOT FULLY AFTER THE LORD, AS DID DAVID HIS FATHER. THEN DID SOLOMON BUILD AN HIGH PLACE FOR CHEMOSH, THE ABOMINATION OF MOAB, IN THE HILL THAT IS BEFORE JERUSALEM, AND FOR MOLECH, THE ABOMINATION OF THE CHILDREN OF AMMON. AND LIKEWISE DID HE FOR ALL HIS STRANGE WIVES, WHICH BURNT INCENSE, AND SACRIFICED UNTO THEIR GODS. AND THE LORD WAS ANGRY WITH SOLOMON, BECAUSE HIS HEART WAS TURNED FROM THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, WHICH HAD APPEARED UNTO HIM TWICE, AND HAD COMMANDED HIM CONCERNING THIS THING, THAT HE SHOULD NOT GO AFTER OTHER GODS: BUT HE KEPT NOT THAT WHICH THE LORD COMMANDED."—1 KINGS XI. 4–10.

"AND THE HIGH PLACES THAT WERE BEFORE JERUSALEM, WHICH WERE ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MOUNT OF CORRUPTION, WHICH SOLOMON THE KING OF ISRAEL HAD BUILDED FOR ASHTORETH THE ABOMINATION OF THE ZIDONIANS, AND FOR CHEMOSH THE ABOMINATION OF THE MOABITES, AND FOR MILCOM THE ABOMINATION OF THE CHILDREN OF AMMON, DID THE KING DEFILE. AND HE BRAKE IN PIECES THE IMAGES, AND CUT DOWN THE GROVES, AND FILLED THEIR PLACES WITH THE BONES OF MEN." —2 KINGS XXIII. 13, 14.

SOLOMON'S HIGH PLACES ON THE MOUNT.

IN the days of King Josiah, a pile of imposing buildings of Tyrian architecture, crowned the southern eminence of the MOUNT of OLIVES. Gigantic idols,—some, unshapely blocks of wood, others of stone, all strange to look upon in that site,—peered above the groves of myrtle, olive, and terebinth which encircled them. In one swift hour of retribution, this pious King and youthful Reformer swept the abominations away. The images of Ashtoreth and Chemosh and Molech were broken in fragments, and rolled down to the channel of the Kedron; and the shrines they guarded were left a mass of ruin.

How came these idolatrous sanctuaries, on the opposite side of the Jehoshaphat ravine, thus impiously to confront the Temple of God? What is their history, and what the lessons to be deduced from them?

Their builder was *Solomon*,—Solomon, the most complex character in Holy Writ: a strange intermixture of intellectual greatness and moral degradation. Never did vessel leave the harbour with expectation of a brighter destiny,—never was there a more humiliating wreck. Like his own beauteous Temple on Mount Moriah, he stands before us, in early youth, pure and noble; his name "Jedidiah," "the beloved of God;" the pride and hope of his father, "tender and only-beloved in the sight of his mother," (Prov. iv. 3.)

But the clouds gather in the midst of that fair sunshine,—the lightning leaps forth,—the fair alabaster pillars are scathed and blackened: "O Lucifer! son of the morning, how art thou fallen?" Unlike the wonted progression in the virtues of the good and the true, his life—and that, too, not only after a morning, but a manhood, of promise—was a history of deterioration. Not "from strength to strength" did he go, but rather from weakness to weakness. Surrounded with all the gifts of fortune and genius, raised to the pinnacles of unexampled and unparalleled earthly grandeur, he became the victim of degraded passions and dark, gloomy, atheistic thoughts. The golden-dowered prince degenerated into the most miserable of men:

"Melancholy marked him for her own."

It is a mournful "*Memory of Olivet*" this; but, as we stand in thought on the slopes of Moriah or Zion, gazing across the Kedron valley on these ruined pagan shrines, let us gather from the contemplation the lessons they are so well fitted to convey, viewed in connexion with the character and history of their builder. Let us confine ourselves to two of these.

Learn *the sad but righteous result and recompense of sin.* Solomon had acted in direct contravention of God's will and purpose in singling out Israel from the surrounding nations as the depositary of the true faith. A wise barrier had been erected between them and the rest of the world; and their safety consisted in conserving the ancient landmarks and remaining a standing witness to the unity of the divine Being. He had, in the pride of empire—the lust

of political power and aggrandisement — cultivated and encouraged political alliances with adjoining Pagan kingdoms, specially with Egypt and Phœnicia. The extension of commercial intercourse by means of the navies which floated on the Mediterranean in the west, and the Red Sea in the east, was dearly purchased by contamination with the principles and the creeds of the heathen. The silver of Tarshish and the gold of Ophir were procured at the expense of tarnishing nobler traditions and betraying more sacred trusts. "Evil communications" corrupted "good manners." One false and fatal step led on to another; political alliances were followed by social and domestic ones. In violation of a still more sacred and more rigid moral enactment, the Polygamy of these other oriental kingdoms, with which he had been brought into commercial relation, was in an evil hour imported to Palestine. Not Egypt and Phœnicia alone, but the border nations of Edom and Moab and Ammon, whose religious worship was idolatry of the darkest type, consisting in cruel and licentious rites, contributed wives to his Palace. A character, originally bold and independent, became enervated and effeminate,—the tool and slave of others. His fine sensibilities were blunted,—his conscience seared. The lauded justice and magnanimity of his early reign was changed into tyranny. Once the idol of his people: by profligate expenditure on self and sin, he became the despot. His extravagance was maintained at the expense of a grinding taxation. Poor frail human nature! "He who had prayed for his people at the dedication of the Temple, 'Let your hearts be undividedly given unto the Lord,' (1 Kings viii. 61,) now

himself began to divide his heart."* The life which was once like the delicate tracery of one of the marble pillars of that Temple, became scarred and mutilated. The mind that could dictate the everlasting truths of his own Book of Proverbs, had lapsed, by all these evil influences, into moral imbecility, mistaking wild licence for liberality and toleration. He attempted (what was impossible) to fuse all religions into one. He tried to incorporate light with darkness, Christ with Belial, purity with impurity, good with evil. The usual result and penalty soon developed itself. He became indifferent to all religion. Providence was an insolvable problem,—life itself a profound enigma.

What do we learn from this mournful travesty of genius and wealth and renown? Is it not, to beware of aught that would mar and endanger the simplicity of our faith and religious character. If God has given us prosperity—whatever that outward prosperity be, wealth, position, intellect—let us beware of prostituting the gifts of the Great Giver to our spiritual ruin. If these, as in Solomon's case, lead us to tamper with the divine safeguards of our peace,—let us hear (as he refused to hear) the monitory voice—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate." What especial carefulness is demanded in the formation of friendships and companionships likely to imperil the soul's best interests, by tending to lower the standard of religious principle, or to sap the foundations of religious belief. Nor need we be deterred from specially including, the most sacred and momentous of human alliances,—the most fatal in its influences for evil—the most permanent in its influence for good. How

* Keil on the Book of Kings, p. 182.

many, like the King of Judah, rush thoughtlessly into an unholy, unsanctified marriage union? In the case of how many who have begun life full of bright promise and noble aspirations, has their first retrograde step been traced to a frivolous, ungodly connexion! Solomon's *political* alliances and commercial adventures doubtless produced their unwholesome and fatal results too; but it is expressly said of him—"His *wives* turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God." This is no theme to be turned aside with a flippant smile. Many there are, who, in old age, review the bitterness of a misspent life; and a life misspent, because those who shared its hours frittered them away in superficial excitement or selfish pleasure. Hundreds of such could warn, with tearful eyes, those venturing on the precipice;—those who make outward attractions, or wealth, or brilliant connexion, a substitute for *moral* qualities. Though beautiful as Tirzah—though patrimonied with the gold of Ophir, the silver-mines of Tarshish, and the ivory palaces of Phœnicia—though encircled with every splendour of house and equipage, which, in our own times, money can bestow;—better far is the man whose wealth is "the clean hands and the pure heart," and the noble purpose;—better she, who, undowered in aught else, has "the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of great price." Solomon, nor Solomon's Bride, in all their glory, were not arrayed like one of these!

As we gaze yet again on these ruined Temples, let us learn, *the perpetuative power of evil influences.*

More than three hundred years had elapsed since the idolatrous shrines had been erected; and even although in the spirit of a reformer—an ancient iconoclast—Josiah had demolished them as places of worship, their relics, (the old stones and debris, if not some of the pillars and architecture,) remained so late as the days of our Lord;—ay, indeed, even to this day the old site retains a name of bad pre-eminence—"the Mount of offence." To all the leal-hearted among Israel, these stones were, for generations, an "offence." They shook the dust off their feet as they passed them by. Solomon may have reared them at the time in a moment of caprice, never dreaming of their permanency, or that they would even outlive his reign. It may have been simply to satisfy the pride or vanity, the superstition or passion of some of the heathen women to whom he had sold himself. But long after he was laid in the last still sleep in the sepulchre of David, they lived! The sad memory of his apostasy was handed down and perpetuated from generation to generation. It needed no divine chronicler to write, as in the case of Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin:"—the mournful truth was carved on these tablets on the brow of OLIVET. Every worshipper in the Temple-courts read, morning and evening, the humiliating fact—that the most renowned of all their kings—the builder of their Temple—the penman of some of their sacred books, had miserably forsaken the Lord God of his fathers;—that the mightiest ruler on earth, had failed to rule his own spirit. It matters not what is the truth respecting that oft-debated question of Solomon's state of mind at the end of his life: whether he went down to his grave in the deep

darkness of despair, a ruined unreclaimed castaway, or (as we are rather far disposed to think) repentant and saved—saved at the eleventh hour—saved, "yet so as by fire." But what of this? His repentance could not demolish these stone memorials, nor obliterate the memory of his great crimes. His penitence may have been (and we charitably trust *was*) sincere;—accepted by Him whom he had disowned and provoked. Twice over, called "the Beloved of God," we may trust, that when laid in his regal tomb on Zion, God gave "His beloved, *sleep*." But it was enough to disturb that quiet "sleep" in the adjoining mausoleum, to think of these ruined walls and pillars, bearing witness for a thousand years to his lust and cruelty, his selfishness and atheism: that instead of the memories of a holy, saintly life, uncontaminated with the impurities of the heathen, he had transmitted a legacy of foul example, to those who would not fail to screen and cover their own infamy by his greatness.

Parents! ye who have in any way compromised truth, and honour, and virtue, and religious principle in the eyes of your children,—bear in mind the truth, that, in an awful sense, you too must come one day to be like these ruined temples on Mount OLIVET. When you die—when your voice is silent—the memory of your sin will remain. The sad memorials will be still there! Your children will look at them. To some, they may be beacons of warning;—to others, encouragment and authority for similar guilt and wrongdoing. May the reverse rather be the happy reality. How many among us can call up the unblemished recollections of a sacred parental home,—its pure light guiding and comforting amid the treacherous billows which have

since been traversed. God keep us, in our turn, from being "mounts of offence;" that when we die, the world, or (those dearer to us than the world,) may gaze back upon us with the sigh and the tear,—we, who are now, in a nobler sense, God's living Temples, becoming ruins, blackened and rent with the lightning and storm! We must be one or other. The temple of God, or the temple of Ashtoreth. We must either transmit a heritage of good or of evil. Look at Abraham with *his* altar, pitched side by side with his tent. The tent was taken down,—demolished. It left no vestige behind it. But the altar was enduring. The roving Canaanite marked the spot where the patriarch had prayed and vowed; and his own children (generations afterwards) loved to gaze on the memorial-stones, and associate them with the faith and devotion of their great progenitor. Shall ours be Abraham's commemorative and votive altars of faith, and trust, and holy hope? or Solomon's memorial-stones of apostasy and licentiousness and crime? Shall we be a blessing or a curse? Shall we be missed, revered, loved, when we leave the world? or shall our names be whispered with saddened look and bated breath? Shall our children point to our graves and say, "He *ruined* me," or "He *saved* me?"

Let us close, with what the subject naturally suggests, a word to those occupying the two extremes of existence, *Youth* and *Old age.*

YOUTH:—look at these ruins on the Mount and be warned. Do not say, 'I require no warning, I have been piously brought up—religiously educated—no fear of me.'

So also was Solomon. Never did father dote more fondly on a son: and he appeared, too, all that a father's fondest hopes could desire. The Book of Proverbs, written in his best days, attests the purity of his life and the grandeur of his aim and purposes. But what the old writers call "the world's trinity"—"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"—these, which he had trifled and tampered with, proved his ruin. Go and read another of his sacred writings, that plaintive and dolorous "cardiphonia," *the Book of Ecclesiastes.* That book, may we not fondly hope, was composed in the last hours of penitent life. It is a mournful autobiography—a mournful retrospective diary. In it, he records all his various and ingenious ways of solving the problem of existence—the problem of happiness—by intellectual pursuits, æsthetic pleasures, schemes of ambition, commercial enterprise, splendour of court and palace and levee—all that eye or ear or heart could wish or devise. Yes, come to this terrible drama; come seat yourself in front of that stage,—watch the scenic effects there, and the characters—the *dramatis personæ*—which flit to and fro in that bright and bewildering background. A magnificent palace first attracts the eye, with its vast colonnades:—its central tower, with a thousand golden shields hung outside, gleaming under an oriental sun, "all shields of mighty men." Gardens or paradises stretch away in the distance, beautified and adorned with every tree and shrub, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall; while birds of rare plumage flit from bough to bough! Anon, the scene is lighted up with living actors;—five hundred youths, clad in purple, and their dark-flowing ringlets

powdered with dust of gold, await with fleet steeds outside the palace gates. The gush of music meanwhile sweeps through adjoining cedar-galleries, and an expectant crowd line the distant highway. But while these are the brilliant accompaniments,—see the chief actor in this scene of imposing grandeur. In the foreground is a throne of ivory;—its basement is of gold, with six golden lions flanking the flight of golden steps. Seated on that throne, is the object of all this pomp of circumstance. But alas! it is a countenance dark with despair,—a faded—wasted—sated voluptuary. All that array of magnificence behind, seems to be but a mockery of his anguished thoughts, as he wails out the confession of a misspent life—a futile chase after happiness—"All is vanity and vexation of spirit!"

From Solomon's sad but brilliant life we surely have the truth forcibly brought home to us, that *goodness* is alone true *greatness*. It is neither the gifts of fortune nor the gifts of intellect which give happiness. It is *worth*—the state of the moral affections, which makes the man. There are many possessed of great wealth and great intellect without *souls*. Many of great means and of great attainments, who are little else than cold masses of material or intellectual fuel, unlit by the glowing fire of goodness. They become cynical, supercilious, unsympathising, unloving; in religion often sceptical. And a sadder phase still is, when, as in the case of Solomon, great genius is wedded to great crime. You who have the dew of youth upon you,—if God has given you gifts, bring them early to Him as consecrated offerings. Solomon's was one of those strong, ardent, impetuous temperaments, which, had they been guided aright,

would have made him the greatest and best, as well as the most gifted of all kings of antiquity. But in an evil moment—to use a modern simile—with rash hand the engine was reversed just at the top of the incline, and, without rope or brake, down it plunged through the dark tunnel, and no mortal power could avert the fatal crash of ruin. Had virtue been the helm of his life, what a freight of glory would that noble vessel have carried, in its course through summer seas. But he recklessly surrendered the helm to passion; and with him, as with thousands on thousands of hapless ones, the saying of a later and wiser Christian philosopher became true—"Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death!"

The life and example of Solomon has a special moral and warning also to the AGED:—to those—not who are climbing the mountain—but who are descending, and are facing the westering sun. We often hear of the unsteadiness of giddy youth,—youth wavering between the right and the wrong—vacillating between fixed principles; and, alas! the current of evil too often proving the strong and the fatal one. But we seldom think of unsteadiness and vacillation in connexion with maturer years: we generally suppose that on the turn of manhood or womanhood, character is stereotyped, principles rooted, and that once the ship has cleared the bar, there is no more fear of foundering. Generally, it is so: but not always. And in the case of Solomon, we have a beacon lighted on a rock in that open sea, and monitory words wafted to us on the wings of the storm,—"When thou

thinkest thou standest take heed lest thou fall!" Here was no young, easily broken sapling,—no reed shaken by the wind,—but an old gnarled cedar of Lebanon, a sturdy oak of Bashan bent before the blast of temptation. It was not in early blossom nor in tender bud, but in full flower, that the frost nipped him: in full blown glory, leaf by leaf withered and fell. What a lesson for watchfulness! What a testimony as to the need of grace to the very last, in the battle with inward corruption and outward temptation! Truly, "there is no discharge in that war."

Nor must we conclude, without a word of comfort and encouragement to the erring, the backsliding—it may even be the apostate—who, in the memory of their sin and ingratitude, can at times think of nothing but abandonment and despair. Solomon, we believe, low as he fell, was not suffered to die unreclaimed. We cannot now go to the proof of this. But there are gleams of light emitted in the sad story of his life, which lead us to think and hope the best;—that for this (in one sense) greatest "Jerusalem sinner," there was mercy. Shut up as he was in the dungeons of "Doubting Castle," Giant Despair was not permitted to include his bones among the skeletons of similar hapless pilgrims. The volcanoes of lust and crime had poured their lava-streams over a heart once full of noble emotions: but as existence is closing, we can discern, through the seams of that crust, the buddings of a new and better life: vine-leaves are bursting through these ashes of desolation. The mid pages of his life-volume are soiled and tattered, but the last leaf of the last chapter, ends, as life had begun, with "*Jedidiah* —the beloved of the Lord." Hear the words of the great

and good Nehemiah regarding him, many generations after he had slept with his fathers,—"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who *was beloved of his God,*" (Neh. xiii. 26.) And are we not warranted to say, that for the most wandering and erring sheep, there is the blessed possibility of restoration and return to the Great and Good Shepherd? We dare not—even to the life-long prodigal with gray hairs and tottering step, say, "There is *no hope* for you!" Gazing upwards, once more, on these desolate temples on the Mount of offence—while pondering the silent lessons their mouldering ruins convey—let us hear, amid this saddest of OLIVET memories, the voice of one Greater than Solomon—in one of the noblest and tenderest of His parable-discourses, describing the truant wanderer from the spiritual fold—"And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost!" (Luke xv. 5, 6.)

V.

The Red Heifer.

"AND THE LORD SPAKE UNTO MOSES AND UNTO AARON, SAYING, THIS IS THE ORDINANCE OF THE LAW WHICH THE LORD HATH COMMANDED, SAYING, SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY BRING THEE A RED HEIFER WITHOUT SPOT, WHEREIN IS NO BLEMISH, AND UPON WHICH NEVER CAME YOKE: AND YE SHALL GIVE HER UNTO ELEAZER THE PRIEST, THAT HE MAY BRING HER FORTH WITHOUT THE CAMP, AND ONE SHALL SLAY HER BEFORE HIS FACE: AND ELEAZER THE PRIEST SHALL TAKE OF HER BLOOD WITH HIS FINGER, AND SPRINKLE OF HER BLOOD DIRECTLY BEFORE THE TABERNACLE OF THE CONGREGATION SEVEN TIMES: AND ONE SHALL BURN THE HEIFER IN HIS SIGHT; HER SKIN, AND HER FLESH, AND HER BLOOD, WITH HER DUNG, SHALL HE BURN: AND THE PRIEST SHALL TAKE CEDAR WOOD, AND HYSSOP, AND SCARLET, AND CAST IT INTO THE MIDST OF THE BURNING OF THE HEIFER."—NUM. XIX. 1–6.

"FOR IF THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND OF GOATS, AND THE ASHES OF AN HEIFER SPRINKLING THE UNCLEAN, SANCTIFIETH TO THE PURIFYING OF THE FLESH: HOW MUCH MORE SHALL THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, WHO THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT OFFERED HIMSELF WITHOUT SPOT TO GOD, PURGE YOUR CONSCIENCE FROM DEAD WORKS, TO SERVE THE LIVING GOD?"—HEB. IX. 13, 14.

THE RED HEIFER.

AMONG these Old Testament "MEMORIES OF OLIVET," it is refreshing again to come on one, which seems so impressively to anticipate the words and teachings, and, above all, the priceless Sacrifice of Him, who was afterwards to sanctify that Mount with His Presence. It is a Gospel memory throughout. We shall almost seem to hear, as we proceed, the Litany of coming years sounding across the dark gorge of the Kedron, and echoed from the valley to the mountain summit—"By Thine agony and bloody sweat; by Thy cross and passion; by Thy precious death and burial; by Thy glorious resurrection; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost!"

The sacrifice of the Red Heifer has its earlier associations with the Tabernacle in the wilderness; but it is of its later celebration we are now to speak, after the conquest of Jerusalem by David.

Across a lofty bridge, leading direct from the eastern gate of the Temple—the gate Shushan—and spanning the Kedron valley,—(but no trace of which is now visible,)—there was seen moving, ever and anon, a strange and unwonted procession. It was headed by the elders and the Jewish High Priest, followed by the Levites and subordinate officers of the Holy Place. Along this sacred viaduct was conducted to the grassy altar on the MOUNT OF OLIVES, *one solitary*

victim. So far as we are informed, no pomp of circumstance heralded it; no sprigs of myrtle and olive, as at the Feast of Tabernacles, wreathed its devoted head; no sound of trumpets, as at the bringing of the water from the Siloam pool, announced its approach. Crowds, we may well suppose, were gathered on the green slopes, to witness a rite, unique of its kind, in the Hebrew ceremonial:—all the denser would the gathering be, as the immolation of the Red Heifer was not, like the other great sacrificial convocations, an anniversary, but one which apparently occurred only at wide intervals. When the solemn procession paused, the victim was first slain, then consumed to ashes on one of the ridges; or, as some say, on the summit of the Mount.*

* The Bridge, say the Rabbins, in order to raise it above graves and defilement, was double-arched—arches upon arches—one arch upon two arches—so that the foot of one arch stood upon two arches that were underneath it. Moreover, they mention, that, side by side with the Red Heifer Bridge, there was a foot causeway, by which the scapegoat was led away by the hands of the "fit-man" into the wilderness. "Both were built at the charges of the public treasure which was in the Temple. . . . The gate Shushan was lower by five cubits than any other gate, in order that the Priests, when sprinkling the blood of the Red Heifer (about to be burnt on Mount Olivet) towards the altar, might be enabled to look over this gate (along the lofty bridge) and through the beautiful and Nicanor gates, and get a view of the altar." The Bridge was probably demolished by the Jews on the approach of Titus. The LAVATORY must have been somewhere nigh the eastern extremity of the Red Heifer Bridge, but probably nearer the *Bethano*, as it was called, with its two cedar trees. "The Lavatory," says Lightfoot, "was a pool or collection of waters where people were wont to wash, and it agreeth very well with those things that were spoken before concerning purifications. Here, either unclean men or women might wash themselves; and presently, buying in the neighbouring shops whatever was needed for purification, they betook themselves to Jerusalem and were purified in the Temple."—Dr Barclay's "City of the Great King," pp. 62, 102, 282. See also illustration in Frontispiece.

When we think of this place of sacrifice as within view,—perhaps within little more than a stone's-cast of the Garden of Gethsemane, it has, in connexion with the later place of celebration, even a more touching and suggestive interest, as the type of Him who "suffered without the gate."*

It is *Death*, the curse and result of sin, which forms the foreground of the typical picture. The sacrifice of the Heifer was to provide a method of purification for those who had touched the dead. If the Hebrew, of necessity or by accident, came in contact with death in any form, he was considered ceremonially unclean. Were he, in entering his tent in the wilderness, or his home in Palestine, to behold the dead body of a friend or relative, or were he to perform the last sad offices of affection towards him:—nay more, if by accident he were to pass over the grave of the dead,—touch the green sod or rocky tomb where their ashes reposed:—if walking over the battle-field, his feet were to stumble on the unburied slain,—or were he even to tread on a bone or fragment of the human skeleton,—that moment the brand of ceremonial uncleanness is put upon him: he is debarred from any approach to the services of tabernacle or Temple. What an affecting symbol is Death here of *Sin!* From the very minuteness of the directions given—extending, as we have just noted, even to the earth scattered on the grave's mouth, and the fragmentary bone of the buried skeleton which accident left beside the tomb—the defiling nature of sin in every shape and form is emphatically pro-

* The Rabbins believed that the sacrifice of the last Red heifer would be made by the hands of "King Messiah Himself." This assertion is followed by the prayer: "Amen. May He come quickly."

claimed, disqualifying the transgressor from holding fellowship either with God or with His people.*

But, in the case of the Hebrew, there was a strange yet gracious provision for purging away his ceremonial defilement; and in the olden type, we behold a striking representation of God's method of a nobler Redemption, both from the curse and the pollution of sin;—for the procuring alike of pardon and holiness, Justification and Sanctification. Let us briefly enumerate (and it can be little more than an outline) the various features of this Gospel Remedy, as these are consecutively unfolded in the narrative of this remarkable chapter of Numbers.

We have first to observe that it was *One* Heifer which the children of Israel were commanded to bring. Not as on sundry other noted solemn convocations, when each person, or each family, or even each city, had to provide their offering for the altar. At present, one animal was deemed sufficient for the whole congregation;—one sacrifice for the whole land; and when the significant rite was finished, we have every reason to believe that the ashes of the one victim were carefully partitioned for distribution in every town in Palestine. That *one* offering was enough for all. Even the strangers in Israel were specially allowed to participate in the benefits secured. It was, in this respect, in significant keeping with most of the other Old Testament types;—one Ark—one

* "Uncleanness contracted by the touch of a grave which appeared not, intimates the defilement of the conscience by sins of ignorance, and the cause we have to cry out, 'Who can understand his errors?' and to pray, 'Cleanse us from secret faults—faults which we ourselves do not see ourselves guilty of.'"—*Matthew Henry's Commentary.*

Ladder—one smiting of the Rock—one brazen Serpent—one Scapegoat—all impressively pointing to the "One offering for sin" by which Christ "hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and which enabled Him to proclaim with triumphant voice on the cross, "It is finished." "But now *once* in the end of the world hath He appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," (Heb. ix. 26.) "Neither is there salvation in any other," (Acts iv. 12.) "Wherefore also He is able to save them unto the uttermost that come unto God by him," (Heb. vii. 25.) "But this man, after he had offered *one* sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God," (Heb. x. 12.) Yes, and as He is the one offering on earth, so is He the one Intercessor in Heaven. As on the great day of Atonement, no voice was suffered to be heard within the veil, but that of the High Priest;—as unaccompanied by human footstep, alone he pled—alone he sprinkled the blood—alone he waved the censer;—so Christ hath entered *alone* into the Holy Place, "having obtained eternal Redemption for us."

The next qualification of the appointed victim was, that it be a Heifer, *spotless* and *red.* "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a *red heifer without spot.*" Among the flocks that were scattered far and wide in the glens or wadŷs of the desert, or afterwards, amid the herds gathered for sacrifice in the pens or folds of OLIVET, it was no ordinary animal that would suffice. It must be a heifer of reddish hue, and *all* red throughout: no mottled spots must be seen on her hide; these would disqualify her for

being a fitting oblation.* There is a danger in straining too far the typical interpretation, and in extracting evangelical and gospel meaning from what is merely accidental and arbitrary. But we are only following the oldest interpreters —nay, we are only according with Scripture authority— when we take "*Red*" here, as elsewhere, in a figurative sense, as the expressive symbol or token of *blood;* with special significancy pointing to Him whose vesture was "dipped in blood;"—the Warrior of Edom, "with dyed garments from Bozrah"—"The man" in Zechariah's vision "among the myrtle trees in the valley," riding on "the *Red* horse." May not the expressive and peculiar symbolism also suggest, the legal transference of sin from the person of the transgressor to that of his divine Substitute,—those sins of a guilty world which are spoken of as *red,*—"red as scarlet and red as crimson," and which have been imputed to the immaculate Surety? "Surely He hath borne our griefs." "He was *made sin* for us." "The Lord laid on Him the iniquities" (these red and scarlet iniquities) "of us all." Himself personally spotless, He stands before the congregation of His redeemed, as the sin-burdened and sin-stained Surety; and if we inquire with the wondering Prophet, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments as him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" He can answer, "I have trodden the wine-

* "The selection of this victim has been supposed to have been dictated in opposition to the superstitions of Egypt. The Egyptians never sacrificed cows which were sacred to Isis. . . . This, too, is the only occasion on which any direction is given about the colour of the victim, a subject to which the priests of Egypt gave so much attention. But red hair was abhorred by them, who believed Typhon—the Satan of their religious system to be of that colour, and to whom accordingly they offered red bulls in sacrifice."—See *Horne's Introduction*, in loc.

press alone." * Nor is this red symbol (of blood and suffering) confined to the Church on earth. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" "These are they . . . . who have washed their robes, and made them white in the *blood* of the Lamb." † And what is their song? It is this—as they surround the throne of the adorable Redeemer, still wearing on His glorified Person the memorials of His bleeding sacrifice—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own *blood*." ‡

The next qualification in the selected heifer was, that *it be unblemished;*—"*wherein is no blemish.*" Not only was it to be red, without spot, its hide without diversity of colour;—but no scar—no wound—no bruise—no imperfection of any kind was to mark or maim its body. It was to be a perfect animal of its kind—the best and choicest of the herd.

So also, in a far nobler, loftier sense, with the Great Sacrifice. As one blemish on horn, or shoulder, or neck, or leg, or hoof, would have vitiated the Hebrew victim, and rendered the memorable procession along the Kedron bridge a mockery;—so, if one speck or stain of sin had blemished the Person of an Incarnate Saviour, His sacrifice would have been unavailing, salvation unsecured, the world unsaved. But He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." There are spots on the disc of the sun. Approach the snow-white Alp—glowing in the distance, a vast Pyramid of stainless marble—and you find its giant brow and virgin bosom rent and dislocated with scars—torn and disjointed with the

* Is. lxiii. 2, 3. † Rev. vii. 13, 14. ‡ Rev. i. 5.

fury of tempest and avalanche, and Time's corroding hand. But approach that divine Redeemer;—gaze upwards on that Sun of Righteousness;—lift up your eyes to the Everlasting hills from whence come your help,—no spot, no scar, from sin's mutilating, contaminating touch, will you find *there*. From the first hour He drew an infant's breath in the manger of Bethlehem, till the last, when He closed His eyes in their deep sleep on the bitter Tree, He could utter the challenge to men and devils, "Which of you convinceth me of sin!" His feet, as He trod the earth, as well as when He appeared in apocalyptic vision in Patmos, were "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." "He offered himself WITHOUT SPOT to God!"

Another requisite in the selection of the Red heifer was, that *no yoke had been put upon it*. This is the next point in the divine injunction:—"*upon which never came yoke*,"* (ver. 2.) JESUS, our adorable Saviour, had the yoke of no obligation laid upon Him, in undertaking the great work of atonement. The Infinite, the Independent, the Omnipotent, He was beyond and above all law—all the requirements of

* Dr Kitto has the following note appended to this verse, in his "Pictorial Bible:"—

"This, as Dr Adam Clarke remarks, is one of the many usages in matters of sacrifice in which the identity of the heathen practice with that of the Hebrews, seems to indicate the common patriarchal origin of both. . . Homer has several passages in allusion to the practice in question, and the following from Virgil may be quoted, (Georg. iv. 550.)

'From his herd he calls
For slaughter four, the fairest of his bulls,
Four heifers from his female stock he took,
All fair—*and all unknowing of the yoke.*'"
—DRYDEN'S TRANSLATION.

creatureship: He was "a law unto Himself." Of the highest created angels it could not be said, "*upon which never came yoke.*" *They* have the yoke of dependence laid upon them—the yoke of *duty* common to all God's family. They are the servants—the delegated messengers of Him before whom they cast their crowns; and as such, even had they been willing for the self-sacrifice, and had that sacrifice been in other respects adequate and admissible, they could, by no personal act, have surrendered their lives as a ransom for the guilty. By attempting to do so, though the expression is a strong one, they would virtually have been *suicides:* they would have been guilty of forfeiting that which was not their own, and for which they were responsible to another. On Christ—the Eternal, Self-existent Son, alone, had there come *no yoke.* He alone was free to undertake the Suretyship of the fallen. When the question was propounded amid the heavenly hierarchies, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" He alone of the myriad throng was warranted to reply, "Here am I, send me:" He alone could assert, (what neither angel nor seraph could do,) "I *have* power over my own life: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," (John x. 18.) And then, add to this, the perfect voluntariness of His sacrifice. In this, the type failed. The Heifer was driven reluctant from its herd,—sent lowing to the place of offering. Not so with the great Antitype. It was no unwilling yoke to which He stooped, when, "though in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, He made himself of no reputation, and *took upon him* the form of a servant." "Lo, I come," was His joyful assent;—"I delight to do thy will, O my God." His only

impelling motive was *love*. He "*loved* the Church," and consequently "He gave HIMSELF for it." "Therefore," He saith, "doth my Father love me, BECAUSE I lay down my life that I might take it again." The reverse of the taunt hurled at Him during the crucifixion-agonies, was the true exponent of that Great oblation, 'He will save others; Himself He will not save.' He, the true "corn of wheat," according to His own simple and beautiful illustration, "fell into the ground and died:" but had He seen meet, He might have "abode alone"—abode at His Father's right hand, never unrobed nor uncrowned of His divine glory. The tears of OLIVET—the agonies of Gethsemane—the death-pangs of Calvary—all that baptism of blood and suffering, was His own voluntary undertaking. "Upon Him never came yoke!"

The next point to which our attention is drawn, is *the conducting of the Heifer without the camp*. "Ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth *without the camp*." This was a strange exception to the general rule. The appointed place of sacrifice was *within* the camp, or within the Temple-courts. But in the present instance, when, after searching among the flocks in the wilderness, or in the folds by the Kedron, or in the sheep-market, the required animal was found,—forthwith it was led, not to the Altar of the Tabernacle or Temple, but away, four miles from the Holy place into the desert, or to some grassy knoll on the slopes of OLIVET. It is brought "forth *without the camp*."

"Christ also suffered *without* the gate."* Calvary's Mount

* Heb. xiii. 12.

as well as Gethsemane's Garden, were purposely outside the city wall: * thus literally fulfilling the type. More than this. There was a deeper spiritual meaning in the Redeemer being thus denied the sanctity of the Temple-altar for His own divine Sacrifice, and being compelled to carry that ignominious Cross on His shoulders—going forth "without the camp bearing His reproach." This exclusion impressively and emphatically denoted the awful nature of that accursed thing, which banished, as it were, the Surety-substitute of sinners from holy ground,—sent Him outside that city, (within whose palaces Jehovah was known as a refuge,) to the place of common execution for felons and murderers:—there, as if God-deserted and forsaken, to rend the air with His bitter Eloi-cry! It was a typical comment on the strong—the mysterious words of the Apostle—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being *made a* CURSE *for us.*" Further, may not the fact of His suffering "without the camp"—outside the precincts of the Holy place—have been intended to foreshadow and proclaim, that His propitiatory sacrifice was not for Israel only, but for the *world.* His cross is set up, without the gates of the Hebrew city, that upon it the inscription may be written in Greek and Latin, as well as in Hebrew—"THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS"—*This is the Saviour of* MANKIND! He on whom "never came yoke," would proclaim to an enslaved world, "Take MY yoke upon you, and learn of Me"—"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." "Unto you, O *men,*" (men of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue,) "I call, and my voice is to the children of men." "Look unto

* See note, chap. i. p. 23.

me, and be ye saved *all the ends of the earth.*" With a similar reference to another part of the type, to which we shall immediately advert, it was predicted of the coming Messiah—"He shall sprinkle *many nations.*"

The next injunction given in the inspired narrative is, that *the Red heifer was to be slain.* "And one shall slay her before his face; and Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times," (ver. 3, 4.) An attendant priest plunged the knife into the neck of the victim; and as the blood gushed forth on the green turf, the High priest, attired in white robes, gathered up in his hand the purple stream, and cast it in the direction of the Tabernacle or Temple. This, too, it is specially mentioned, was done "seven times"—(seven being the old Hebrew symbol, or expression of perfection.)

Christ, the great Antitype, (Himself both High Priest and Victim,) and, as the former, attired in the pure white vestments of His spotless Righteousness,—after shedding His own precious blood, casts, so to speak, the crimson shower in the direction of the Holy place, reconciling us to God "through the blood of His cross." With Him, too, was it a sevenfold sprinkling, for the Captain of our salvation has been "made *perfect* through suffering." It was not enough, on the Socinian theory, that the unblemished, spotless Heifer was brought into the midst of the congregation as a specimen of perfection;—or that Christ came into the world merely to manifest the virtues of a holy, spotless, blameless life. Here, as elsewhere, throughout the whole Levitical

economy, the predominant gospel principle is enunciated—"Without the shedding of blood is no remission." It was the first and the last great truth set forth in Jewish history. It began with the besprinkled lintels and door-posts on the night of the Exodus, and the significant comment of the Jehovah-angel—"When I see *the blood* I will pass over you;" and when that Jewish dispensation was expiring, or rather had merged into a nobler economy, we hear it from the lips of an aged child of Abraham—the last survivor of the apostolic band, as he thus writes in his quiet home in Ephesus—"*The blood* of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Immediately following the slaying of the Heifer, was *the burning and reducing it to ashes*—"And one shall burn the heifer in his sight, her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, and with her dung shall he burn," (ver. 5.) It was to be a thorough committal to the flames: no portion was to remain unconsumed. Cedar and olive wood from the groves around were probably gathered to construct a pile. Further, according to an old Jewish writer, a covering of *scarlet* cloth (to carry out the expiatory significance) was thrown over both altar and victim: the torch was applied, and fresh fuel added, until all was reduced to a heap of white ashes. What an awful testimony to the vileness of sin! what a significant representation of the uncompromising demands of that law which exacted from the spotless Surety payment to the uttermost farthing! HE was subjected to the devouring fire of wrath. The might of indwelling Deity prevented the bush—the "root out of the dry ground" being

consumed; but, lo! "the bush burns with fire." The plowers plowed upon His back, and made long their furrows. "I gave," says He, "my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death." It was no mythical scene of suffering that on Golgotha;—no acted tragedy:—these were no simulated pangs. He could use the plaintive appeal, with an emphasis unknown to any of His suffering people—"Have pity upon me—have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me!"

The next sequence in this expressive type, suggests a truth of elevating comfort: we have now to note *the gathering together of the ashes*—"And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place; and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin," (ver. 9.) The ashes were not allowed to lie in that secluded spot,* to be desecrated by the touch of the passer by, or to be scattered by the winds of heaven: but they were carefully collected, deposited in a vessel, and laid by themselves in a "*clean place*," as a means of purification from sin. To what does this seem symbolically to point? but the perpetual efficacy

* As I have personally seen those of the sacrifices on the top of Mount Gerizim, nearly a year after the previous celebration of the Samaritan passover.

of the Redeemer's atonement. He is no longer now in visible glory, as once He was, when He came as the Surety-mediator, to offer Himself as a whole burnt-offering unto God. But in His divine Person and merits, and with a heart of unalterable love, He still sits on His Kingly throne above, dispensing the priceless covenant benefits He died to purchase. There, in that "separate place," on the true OLIVET — the heavenly Mount — the virtue of His death and sacrifice continues undiminished. He appears there "a Lamb as it had been slain;" ever, in silent eloquence, pleading for the Church redeemed with His blood. Blessed thought! — no time, no years, no centuries, can alter or impair the all-sufficiency of that atoning work. The cloud is ascending, this day, laden with incense—fragrant as at the hour when He, the true Aaron, sprinkled the warm blood on the mercy-seat, and cast into the burning censer the sweet spices of His merits. Be it ours, in the midst of our own vileness, and weakness, and unworthiness—our daily defilement and sin, to remember that the ashes of Calvary's Sacrifice thus symbolically "laid up," and "kept for the congregation"—the ashes of this "Faithful and true Martyr" —form the perpetual life of His Church. We can point to them as the blessed pledge and guarantee of our everlasting safety and security. "Fear not," is His own unchanging assurance, "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold *I am alive for evermore:*" "because I live, ye shall live also." If the first part of this olden type, then, be consoling and comforting, (the blood of the spotless heifer sprinkled towards the Holy courts,) let us think,

with no less consolation and joy, of its ashes being carried into "the separate place;"—and say with our eye on the great antitype, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

But to proceed. The next point which claims our attention is *the special mode or method of purifying the unclean*—"And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel; and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even," (ver. 17–19.) The ashes of the heifer were enjoined to be placed in a vessel along with *running water*, and a clean person (one himself uncontaminated by contact with the dead)* was to

* In order to make sure of such clean persons (I quote nearly in the words of Lightfoot, gathered by him from the Rabbinical writings, vol. ii. p. 34)—there were arches wrought in a rock in Jerusalem, and houses built over them. Some courts were built upon a rock, under which vaults were constructed to prevent the possibility of a sepulchre being there. Mothers about to give birth to children were brought hither, in order that their infants, being brought up rigidly in these enclosures, might be secure from being touched by a sepulchre, or any other contact with death, and fit therefore to sprinkle the appointed water of purification. There is this singular expedient further mentioned by the same,—that

take a cedar rod or stick, with scarlet cloth and a bunch of hyssop, and to sprinkle it, not only on the person ceremonially unclean, but upon his tent, and all the tent furniture. This was to be done *twice*, (on the third and on the seventh day,) and on that seventh day at even, he was to be declared *clean*. This, too, is full of spiritual meaning. Observe, the vessel of purification was to contain alike the ashes of the heifer and running water. What could more beautifully or significantly express the two great cardinal truths of the gospel—justification through the blood, and sanctification through the Spirit of Christ?—the conjoint work of the Son and the Holy Ghost in the salvation of the soul: Christ purging or purifying the dead conscience from guilt;—the Holy Spirit purging and purifying it from pollution. That blessed Agent is often and again set forth in Scripture under the emblem of water. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." When Jesus, in one of His Gospels, speaks of the "rivers of living" or "running waters," it is added expressly, "This spake He of the Holy Ghost." It is the work of the same divine Person that is here represented under the same expressive emblem. The unclean Israelite could not have the ashes sprinkled upon him without the water, or the water sprinkled on him without the ashes. In the new dispensation these are similarly combined—"We are washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the LORD JESUS, and *by the* SPIRIT *of our God.*" While, on the

when these 'clean persons' were called to perform the office of purification, they rode to the pool of Siloam on the back of an ox, alighting in the water, where was no grave to defile, and after filling his pitcher, riding straightway to the Mount of Olives, sprinkling the unclean, and riding direct to his cell again.

one hand, it is the sprinkling of the blood which imparts a virtue to the ashes; on the other, it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that the blood of Christ is made effectual to cleanse from sin—"He shall glorify me," says Jesus, "for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." How beautifully the Psalmist couples (and with evident reference to this very rite) these two great truths. In the same breath he says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; yea, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Take not thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit."

And as the priest employed the cedar, with its bunch of hyssop, to sprinkle the contents of the vessel;—so have these been generally considered as symbolic of *faith*,—that living principle, by which the merits of Christ's death and sacrifice are received and applied. The ashes, unsprinkled, were worthless. It was not sufficient for the unclean simply to come and *gaze* upon them,—to see the spotless heifer led forth to die,—to see the sacrificial weapon plunged into its side, or the smoke rising from its consuming carcass: he had to repair to the "clean place," and have the drops of the commingling stream put upon him. So with us.—Christ must be appropriated. The cedar-rod of faith must bring us in contact with the virtue of His sacrifice. Nor, for the pacifying of the conscience, is once only repairing to "the blood of sprinkling" sufficient. The Israelite of old had to be sprinkled, first on the third day, and afterwards on the seventh; denoting the need, even for the justified believer, of the continual application of the merits of the Redeemer's

death;—in the words of the old writers, travelling continually between his own emptiness and Christ's fulness; or, in the Saviour's own beautiful simile, the need for the Pilgrim to have the soles of his feet, which are daily soiled with the dust of the way, ever washed anew.*

Yet, again, let us note *the thoroughness of the lustration. All the man possessed was sprinkled and made clean.* Not only his own person, but his tent, with all its appendages and contents, (everything he owned,) was consecrated and purified. So is it—or rather, ought it to be—with the Christian. Not only all he is, but all he has, should be sprinkled and lustrated and dedicated to God. His own soul and person first: not, however, resting with this. On the door of his tent should be the inscription, "I am not my own"—"Lord, I am thine." The name of his house should be "Jehovah Shammah—*The Lord is there.*" His family, his business, his domestic arrangements, his employments, his enjoyments, all that belong to him should become consecrated things. With his own conscience sprinkled, purged, and purified, he should be ready to say with the Psalmist, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

In conclusion, let us rejoice in the *fulness* and *freeness* of this gracious provision;—as typical of an equally free and

* See a full exposition of this and other types in "The Church in the Wilderness," by William Seaton, Minister of the Gospel, Wandsworth. 1821.

gracious dispensation of gospel blessings. All—without exception—who had been polluted by the touch or contact of death, were freely admitted to partake of this appointed method of purification. So there is not one to whom we are not warranted to say, "There is salvation, through the merits of Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, for *you!* If by reason of contact with sin, you may be among the vilest of the vile; "though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be like doves, whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold." *Complete justification* you have all at once. Justified once, you are justified for ever. Once within the Great Shepherd's fold, you are in the fold for ever. You are "washed;" and, in accordance with our Lord's simple illustration, just referred to, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, he is clean every whit." But complete *sanctification* you cannot attain, until earth is exchanged for heaven. This, too, was prefigured in the olden type. The man was not made wholly clean until "*the even* of the seventh day"—the closing hour of the week. So believers are not 'made perfect in holiness,' till life's week ends, and the Sabbatic morning dawns. Meanwhile, be it ours to seek to become daily more and more meet for this glorious world, where the defiling touch of sin can be felt and feared no more. Let the whole subject lead believers—God's own people—to beware of the contaminating presence and power of iniquity. The pious Israelite, of old, felt he never could walk too warily, if he would avoid the risk of legal defilement. The fragmental bone might be stumbled upon in the place he least dreamt of finding it. The husbandman might come upon it in his vineyard: the shepherd in

crossing the mountain: the reaper when plying his sickle: the wayfarer might tread on it in the wayside. Oh, beware of sin! It has many defiling graves, which, like the homes of the dead in our own churchyards, belie the corruption beneath, by their covering of virgin snow, or the flowers which the hand of affection has planted. Christ, the Undefiled One, could tread these graves without danger; —He could come in contact with the flames without being burnt. But not so the best and holiest of His imperfectly sanctified people. Walk circumspectly. There are rocks and reefs often unseen in this treacherous sea. If we would avoid entering the haven with broken timbers and shattered rigging, be ours the daily, hourly prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

There is one other solemn statement added, ver. 20, "*The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation.*" This, like all the rest, has a solemn gospel and spiritual meaning. Reject Christ and you are lost! Neglect so great salvation;—disdain this glorious offer (justification through the blood, and sanctification through the cleansing of the Spirit) and "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." If you are feeling now, the bitterness of exile and alienation:—saying, "Mine iniquities have separated between me and my God;"—there is (blessed be His name) a golden vessel of Salvation, filled with all you need for your guilty soul. Applying the contents of that vessel, you shall be no more "strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the

saints and of the household of God." Through this typical "MEMORY OF OLIVET," lay hold of the glorious reality it adumbrates. Your sins may be like that gloomy Kedron gorge, with the dark brook fretting and murmuring beneath. But fear not to cross the provided bridge;—to gather around the provided Sacrifice, and from the bunch of cedar and hyssop, to receive the sprinkling of blood and water. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," (Isa. i. 18.) "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth unto the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ—who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God—purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

VI.

The Home on the Mount.

"AND HE LEFT THEM, AND WENT OUT OF THE CITY INTO BETHANY; AND HE LODGED THERE."—MATT. XXI. 17.

"NOW JESUS LOVED MARTHA, AND HER SISTER, AND LAZARUS."—JOHN XI. 5.

"AND BEING IN BETHANY, IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON THE LEPER, AS HE SAT AT MEAT, THERE CAME A WOMAN, HAVING AN ALABASTER BOX OF OINTMENT OF SPIKENARD, VERY PRECIOUS; AND SHE BRAKE THE BOX, AND POURED IT ON HIS HEAD."—MARK XIV. 3.

"THERE THEY MADE HIM A SUPPER; AND MARTHA SERVED: BUT LAZARUS WAS ONE OF THEM THAT SAT AT THE TABLE WITH HIM."—JOHN XII. 2.

"AND THERE FOLLOWED HIM A CERTAIN YOUNG MAN, HAVING A LINEN CLOTH CAST ABOUT HIS NAKED BODY; AND THE YOUNG MEN LAID HOLD ON HIM, AND HE LEFT THE LINEN CLOTH, AND FLED FROM THEM NAKED."—MARK XIV. 51, 52.

LUKE X. 38–42.
JOHN XI. 18–41.
JOHN XII. 1–12.

THE HOME ON THE MOUNT.

THE following striking passage occurs in the prophecies of Ezekiel:—

"*Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon* THE MOUNTAIN WHICH IS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE CITY," (Ezek. xi. 22, 23.)

Upon these words, we may venture here to repeat the remarkable commentary of the Rabbi Janna in the *Medrash Tehillim*, which has been already given in the introductory chapter:—"The Divine Majesty (Shekinah) stood three years and a half on Mount Olivet, saying, 'Return to me, O ye my sons, and I will return to you': 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near'—and then, when all was vain, returned to its own place."*

Such is a befitting link, connecting the Old Testament "memories of the Mount" with the New,—an apposite prelude and introduction to the chapters which are now to follow, and to the themes we are now to ponder. CHRIST was that true SHEKINAH PRESENCE. For three years and a half He dwelt in our world;—ever and anon, during that

* Lightfoot, vol. ii. p. 39.

time, making OLIVET His place of resort. From its grassy knolls and green slopes, as from a throne of emerald confronting His own Zion, He pleaded in words of stern majesty and tearful tenderness,—"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel." And when His divine mission was terminated, from that same cherished haunt He ascended in the Shekinah-cloud (the emblem of Divinity)—"A *cloud* received Him out of their sight."

It is, while trodden by His footsteps and sanctified by His presence, we are now to linger among the remembrances of Olivet.

We appropriately begin with what may well be called, *the Home on the Mount.* Our adorable Redeemer had more than one resort there. We have good reason to surmise, that in the olive grove or olive garden of Gethsemane especially, (of which we shall speak hereafter,) He had some stated place or locality—some "oratory" for private meditation and prayer,—and where His otherwise unsheltered head would be protected from the drenching dews of a Palestine night. While this, however, is conjectural, there can be no conjecture regarding *one* loved place on that Mount which He claimed as a sacred retirement;—a calm and blissful retreat from coldness and ingratitude, contumely and scorn,—the malignity of avowed enemies,—the treachery of trusted friends,—that Home was BETHANY. In His lonely, solitary nights among the hills and mountains of Galilee, we think of Him chiefly as the *Son of God* holding fellowship with His Father;—here, we think of Him chiefly as the *Son of man*—the Brother of our nature—enjoying sym-

pathetic fellowship with loving and congenial human spirits. Indeed, but for Bethany, the Mount would be deprived of its most sacred associations. It was coming and going from that hallowed Home, which gave occasion for some of the most gracious, as well as some of the most solemn words which proceeded out of His mouth.

The Village itself, is the alone memorable spot in the eastern side of OLIVET. It lies a mile from the summit, nestling in its own little hollow, embosomed in almonds, oaks, carobs, olives, and pomegranates, screened by the higher ridges of the Mount west and north, and thus removed from the noise and tumult of the city. Almost immediately on reaching it, the rapid depression to the Jordan valley commences by the steep road to Jericho,—that same path down which Martha and Mary must, hour after hour, during these long days of unsuccoured sorrow, have wistfully looked for the coming of the absent Saviour.* The wall of the Moab and Perean mountains rise weird and precipitous to the far east,—that same mountainous region in which Jesus and His disciples were sojourning, when the messenger from the bereft sisters carried to Him the tidings, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." The name "House of Dates" would seem to indicate, that, at one period, the palm, now vainly sought for, was numbered

* As we gazed down from the huts of Bethany, after traversing this same steep and sultry road, impressively was that peculiar feature in His humiliation suggested, the bodily toil, the physical fatigue and prostration He had so often to undergo. A picturesque Fountain—"the Fountain of the Apostles"—where we halted for shelter from the fierce afternoon sun, had doubtless the same touching remembrance, though unrecorded, as the well of Jacob—"Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well," (John iv. 6.)

amid Bethany's sylvan beauties. This tree is a native of lower and more genial latitudes than the uplands of Judea. But perhaps it may have been the very strangeness of a group, or a grove of these, being found at this "mountain hamlet," which led to the distinctive epithet. Be this as it may, thither, though "little among the thousands of Judah," the Divine Saviour "ofttimes resorted:" the Great and Good Shepherd ofttimes took shelter in this peaceful fold, from "the lions' dens and the mountains of the leopards;" the true Dove of peace, escaping "the windy storm and tempest," folded its weary wing in this "cleft of the rock." O thrice-blissful Home! thrice-honoured household! If even "*the cup of cold water*, given to a *disciple*, shall not lose its reward;"—what shall be the reward of that loving and beloved family, whose sympathy and kindness served to ease the burdens of "the Man of sorrows,"—to brighten the woe-worn path of the Lord of glory?*

We are always struck with the extreme vividness of John's description of the events connected with Bethany. It gives the idea of the photograph of an eye-witness. No one but a personal and interested spectator could have narrated so graphically and circumstantially as he does, the marvellous story at the grave-yard, and afterwards the no less instructive and beautiful one of the Supper and the

* The most conspicuous feature in the modern village, is the lofty ruin in the centre, built of bevelled stones. It suggests to the eye a dilapidated fort or castle. Indeed, the village is called by Mandeville, and other olden travellers, "the Castle of Bethany." Mr Porter suggests it may be a portion of an old watch-tower. The so-called Tomb of Lazarus (which, like other travellers, I descended,—a limestone vault reached by twenty-five rude steps) is quite unlike a Jewish sepulchre; besides not answering to the site indicated by the sacred narrative.

anointing with the spikenard. None but he, who 'stooped down at another sepulchre and looked in,' could have so tenderly sketched that Divine-human picture. The Inspired artist transferred it to his canvas, when he was residing, probably in his old age, at Ephesus: but the long intervening years had not effaced from his soul the freshness of that wondrous scene. When he wrote, all his compeers in the apostolic band had been taken to their rest and their crowns. Martha and Mary and Lazarus had, we believe, "fallen asleep:" he is the alone solitary survivor of the Feast in Simon's House. He had manifested a wise and delicate reticence in withdrawing the veil from that Home-scene during the lifetime of the family: now, however, that they had paid the great debt of nature, he scruples not to become their divine biographer. He unlocks these long and faithfully-kept secrets for behoof of the Church to its latest day. Like one of the group in his sacred cartoon, he breaks the alabaster box, that the world may be filled with the odour of the ointment; and that "wherever the Gospel is preached" these hallowed memorials may be carried.

But let us, in thought, cross the mountain foot-road with our blessed Lord, and enter the household at BETHANY.

From one or two incidental allusions in the combined narratives, we seem warranted to infer, that this Family occupied a position, if not of wealth and influence, yet certainly one above the humbler ranks of Judean life. They were (what the ordinary villagers around them would not be) the owners of a rock-hewn sepulchre. The nard used by Mary to anoint her Lord is described as "a pound of spikenard, *very costly*." On the death of Lazarus, Jews

of distinction came out to offer their condolence to the bereaved. Probably from the expression used, these Jewish visitors were composed of the Scribes and Pharisees, in general the representatives of the intelligent "upper classes" in Jerusalem. Moreover, from Martha's avowal in the course of her conversation with Jesus, we gather that she was not only conversant with the leading article in the Pharisees' creed, "touching the Resurrection," but had herself espoused it, as if personally at one time identified with the sect.* These facts are indicative that the family were, at all events, raised above mediocrity in circumstances. The very name given to the village, "the town of Mary and her sister Martha," would seem to imply that Bethany was chiefly known in connexion with that one Home; and as if theirs were a dwelling, conspicuous or distinguished amid the lowlier ones that surrounded it. Not that we can draw any special lesson from this in its connexion with Him, whose presence encircles the village with its halo of heavenly interest, and who is "no respecter of persons." This much it teaches, that He was guest and associate alike of rich and poor, lowly and honourable. While He was pre-eminently the poor man's friend, and assumed His apostles from the humblest homes in Galilee;—it is interesting to think that the household which more specially gladdened and solaced Him in the closing days of His life, was one, whose inmates added the culture and refinement of a higher social position to those deeper religious feelings, which imparted to the sacred intercourse its peerless worth.

* See Professor Plumptre's able and ingenious article on "Lazarus," in Smith's Bible Dic.; also, Meyer on St. John, in loc.

And it is beautiful to see in their case, (and this is the point which we would wish alone here more specially to illustrate,*) as in the case of every human family where Christ is loved, and where He is in the highest spiritual sense a daily Visitor;—it is beautiful to note, a gradual education and training—a progressive development in the Christian graces and spiritual character of the inmates. MARTHA, who attracts us first in the description of an earlier passing visit, (Luke x. 38)—though then a true disciple of her great Lord—is yet busy, bustling, impetuous, careworn, harassed with her household duties, troubling herself very needlessly and fastidiously about dispensing the rites of every-day hospitality. Even when trial has banished, for the time, the thought of these poor earthly cares,—still in the very hour of her crushing sorrow, we can discern the native faults of her character—bold, impatient, outspoken—unable to restrain the unworthy surmise and reflection on her Lord's mysterious tarrying beyond Jordan, (xi. 21.) And at the very grave's brink, when Omnipotence is about to work,—proud outspoken Reason will discredit the possibility of ransoming from corruption. But, our last glimpse of her—when the long training is complete—is that of one calmed, subdued, softened. She is at the feast in Simon's house, serving indeed still; but she is a silent member. There was once a day, when she would have discussed with keen eagerness the question of 'waste' which then engrossed the disciples; when she would have perhaps taken Judas's view of the case, and condemned the unwarranted expendi-

* The whole subject of "The Home on the Mount," has been treated in detail, by the writer, in "Memories of Bethany."

ture of her loving and generous, but improvident sister. But she has graduated since then in a new school. She has had instilled into "her loyal heart," a nobler and truer life. The old Pharisee creed she held in common with her educated Jewish friends, as to a common resurrection at the Last day, had been supplanted by a grander and more elevating verity — that believing in Christ, a *present* life was imparted that could never die, (John xi. 25, 26.) Let others indulge, as they may, in questions of casuistry, as to the claims of the poor, and the wantonness of such waste,—she was now a subdued, unreasoning disciple,—listening with trustful reverence, in common with her sister, to ONE she loved more than all the world beside; and if she, too, had had gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, she would have surrendered them willingly, to swell her sister's lowly offering.

In MARY'S case, we note the same education and progress towards higher spiritual development. From the first, indeed, we mark her quiet, gentle, contemplative character. No fretting worldly cares absorb her nobler nature. Her place from the first, was what she retained to the last,—at her Lord's feet. She moved in a little world of devotedness to this Great Redeemer. When we first see her in the Inspired Biography, it is seated thus, "hearing His word"—receiving from unflattering lips the noble panegyric—"Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her," (Luke x. 42.) When we see her next—it is when, roused from absorbing grief, she rushes to her Lord's feet with her wail of love and agony. All the Jerusalem comforters and sympathisers could not wake her from her

trance of sorrow. But when Martha's brief word reaches her ear—"The Master is come!"—she rushes with fleet step "quickly,"—carrying her griefs and fears, and tears and prayers, to the feet of the Great Restorer. Still she is silent. With the exception of the one utterance,—'the pang of wounded affection,'—which had been oft on the lips of the bereft sisters during these long days of sorrow in the lonesome midnight hour—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,"—still, I repeat, she is silent: her plaint is ended with a flood of tears, (John xi. 33.) Martha, even at the grave, (as we have already indicated,) where the crowd have gathered, attempts to doubt and reason and remonstrate,—Mary preserves her characteristic silence—the mute eloquence of unsyllabled grief. But, pass we from the scene of sorrow to the subsequent scene of joy, when the lost star is rekindled in their firmament and death has surrendered his prey,—mark the beautiful development of that hitherto silent, meditative devotion. The contemplative is merged into the active. Martha, is for the time passive,—she "serves," but it is in silence. While Mary, (heroine of the divine scene) brings forth her alabaster vase of precious nard—breaks it with her own hands, and pours its contents as an oblation of love and gratitude on the Head of her gracious Lord. Like some mountain-stream rising unnoted from its green mossy bed, only visible by the tinge of contrasted verdure;—but on reaching the lower valley, on it flows, at first gently and softly—but with ever-increasing volume of mountain-music—gathering strength and song as it speeds to its ocean home. Beautiful type of true Christianity. Mary has been hitherto the recipient, now she is

the giver. The question at the moment is—What can I render unto my Redeeming God and Saviour for all His benefits towards me? Conscious of the reality of her love, she would like to give some visible proof of it. What has she to offer? Her poor services are worthless. Her more demonstrative sister might plead with obdurate sinners—reason with them, convince them. But she can manifest her devotion only by some lowly outward act. She has one valued casket in her possession,—some souvenir of affection, long-treasured; or, it may be, purchased in Jerusalem, with the premeditated intention of using it as she does now. She brings it out with joyful heart:—it is her all,—the best she has to offer. Behold her now, the *active* one in the sacred group, busy in her office of lowly love, anointing the feet of Jesus, wiping His feet with her hair, and "the house filled with the odour of the ointment!"

Let us now transfer our thoughts to another dweller in Bethany, of whom we know little—indeed nothing;—whose history at best must be subject of conjecture—him in whose house the Sabbath Feast took place, and who is called by two other Evangelists "Simon the Leper." The likeliest conjecture hazarded regarding him is, that he was himself the father of the family.* For years, it may be, he had been sundered from all domestic ties by having become the victim of the most fearful of plagues. But the Divine Restorer who had plucked his son from the regions of Hades, had rescued him also from a worse than living death—cured him of a malady which was deemed, by human means, incurable. If this be so, we have also, in his case, surely a beautiful mani-

* So, Theophylact and others.

festation of pious gratitude and love. He makes a feast for his Divine Physician. That dwelling, which, a few weeks before, echoed with the wail of sadness—the desolate sisters, orphaned and friendless—father, mother, brother forsaken them—a future of blank despair!—now, behold, the house of mourning changed into a house of feasting;—their adorable Saviour is seated between the two trophies and monuments of His power and grace—"the living, the living" together praising HIM who had "turned the shadow of death into the morning." The Lord, their Redeemer "had spoken once, yea, twice had they heard this, that power belongeth unto God." In the case of both, He had "taken off their sackcloth and girded them with gladness." Sickness in the one, and death in the other, had been (as was designed) "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."

For this brings us to the one other member of that rejoicing household,—but the one around whom the main interest of the narrative gathers. We are allowed in the case of LAZARUS, conjecturally at least, to trace the same evidence of grateful love. Oh how could *his* tongue be dumb, who had been delivered from so great a death? It is remarkable that in the narratives of St John no light whatever is cast upon his character. We seem to know his sisters intimately, by their marked individuality: but Lazarus is shadowy—undefined:—we are acquainted with him only as their brother, probably the youngest of the household.

We are unable to assent to the theory advanced by some commentators, who endeavour to recognise in him the young

ruler "with great possessions," whom Jesus, on beholding, "loved." A kindred conjecture, however, seems to have more plausible support; and although it can at best be but conjectural, it casts an interesting ray of light on one of the strangest episodes recorded in connexion with our Lord's last sufferings;—an incident preserved by St Mark, and by St Mark alone.

At that awful crisis-hour, (which we shall dwell upon in subsequent pages)—when the struggle of Gethsemane was over,—when the band of soldiers, with lanterns and torches, came, in company with the traitor, to meet Jesus, the panic-stricken disciples were scattered on the mountain sides—the Shepherd was about to be smitten, and the faithless sheep were scattered. At that moment the pass-over moon, and the light of the lanterns and torches, fell on a mysterious figure lurking close by. He was a youth. He had nothing round his naked body but "a white linen cloth." He followed, first tremblingly, then boldly, the assassin band. Who can this be? Who this noble young adherent, who, when the old and tried companions of the Sufferer have ignominiously fled, follows His blood-stained path undeterred by the murderous crew? Peter, with his brave soul,—John, with his loving heart, have both shared in the general panic: but he dares to brave these flashing swords and threatening staves? We know only this of him, that he was immediately seized, as if recognised at once as a friend and ally of Christ's. Ruffian hands are laid upon him. They grasp the linen cloth which covered him; but, with fleet foot, he bounded off from his captors—"He left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked," (Mark xiv. 52.)

Who then, we again ask, could this (or might this) identified and recognised youth be? We read in the immediate sequel to the narrative of the raising of Lazarus and the feast of Bethany, "But the chief priests consulted that they might put LAZARUS also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus." In the preceding context of St Luke's Gospel, it is expressly said, that it was the *chief priests,* in conjunction with the *scribes* and *elders,* who sent out the assassin band and multitude for the apprehension of Christ. Is the surmise an unlikely one, that, hovering amid the rocks of the mountain, or olive groves skirting the well-known path leading from Gethsemane to Bethany, was one who had good reason to love his Lord with a love, which prison and death would never extinguish? What more likely, though unmentioned in connexion with Gethsemane, than that Bethany had sent across the intervening ridge, a more faithful watcher than the unfaithful slumbering apostles?* Roused from his couch by the report, carried to him by his sisters, of the attempted seizure, would it not be the likeliest of occurrences, that their young brother would instantly rush, not perhaps with any vain hope of attempting a rescue, but to follow with loving and wistful sympathy the Adorable Sufferer, to whom he owed his restored life and being? We dare not give rein to imagination, and push such an hypothesis too far. But whence, we are led to ask, this strange costume

* See Art. already referred to, in Bib. Dic. Matthew Henry, though not supporting this interpretation, remarks—"Some young man that lived near the Garden, perhaps in the house to which the Garden belonged." Gresswell hints that the Bethany family may have had possessions in Gethsemane.

of this mysterious follower,—the linen cloth cast round his body in the haste and hurry of that midnight arousing? It is worthy of careful note, first of all, that the word, "*linen cloth*," as rendered by St Mark, (*σινδών*,) is not the same word at all, as is used in other places, with reference to linen garments employed as clothing for the *living*. For example, the "fine linen" in which the rich man is clothed in the parable, is altogether a different word from the one employed by St Mark in his description of this young man, or "the linen cloth" in which was wrapped the body of our Lord. Moreover, while this latter is several times employed by the Evangelists, it is, with one exception, (Matt. xi. 8,) always so in *connexion with the cloth or garment* which shrouded the DEAD.* We know the Jews were specially careful and fastidious regarding all arrangements for burial. Their grave-clothes were reckoned among their sacred things. They yielded to no oriental nation in their attention to funeral obsequies: the embalming spices, and ointments, and linen shroud, were all providently laid up in store. We have just found even the Saviour Himself recognising, in Mary's alabaster box with its pound of spikenard, a 'mournfully foreseeing love' in reference to His death—"Against the day of my burying hath she done this." Even if all this had not been the case, we know, too surely, that

* Dr Kitto, though he does not support the view we have taken, indirectly strengthens it, by rejecting the erroneous supposition made to account for the linen vestment—"Some consider it necessary to suppose that the linen cloth was one of the sheets in which the young man had slept, forgetting that the ancients did not use sheets, and the orientals do not use them to this day."—See *Pictorial Bible*, in loco. See also some remarks of Canon Melvill, in a discourse on this passage, "Less Prominent Facts of Scripture," vol. ii.

Lazarus was in the possession of grave-clothes. But the linen shroud, which, in the case of others, would be a gloomy and forbidding thing, reminding them of death,—would, in His case, be the trophy of the most wondrous victory ever achieved. We could imagine other Jews,—notwithstanding all these devout feelings regarding preparations for the tomb,—shrinking, just as *we* would, with sensitive aversion, from the grim and sad symbols and remembrancers of corruption and the grave,—keeping them scrupulously locked up, away from sight. But with Lazarus it was different. Oh, never could hero look with such wondrous emotion on the spoils of victory, as would this young villager of Bethany regard these mementoes of his astounding resurrection! May we not imagine him, hanging up his linen shroud and the napkin which bound him, as sacred memorials of that never-to-be-forgotten moment, when "the dead came forth bound hand and foot with grave-clothes," and he heard, once more, the living tones of a living voice, "Loose him, and let him go"? Can we dare venture, then, the hypothesis — still further to strengthen the previous conjecture—that, when roused, at dead of night, by the tidings of the assault in Gethsemane, he seized in his haste the suspended robe of which the King of Terrors had been despoiled? May he not, perhaps, have seized it, as being that by which his Lord would best recognise him in the gloom? May he not have taken it as the best, though a silent, memorial of his gratitude, to suggest to the Great Sufferer, in *His* own hour of impending death, that He too would not be holden of it,—that HIS grave-clothes would be made vestures of triumph, the resurrection at Bethany being the shadow and

pledge and precursor of a far greater? Ay, and when he fled naked from those who had seized him, may it not have been the accomplishment of all he had desired, to leave in their hands the linen cloth? Observe, it is not said that the captors wrested from him the shroud; but it is expressly worded, "He *left* the linen cloth, and fled from them naked;"—more as if this had been his object and wish, to deposit with them, and through them, to leave with his Lord, the sacramental pledge and type of His own glorious conquest over death. If so, again would Jesus, in silent gratitude, echo the words He had a few weeks before uttered to that young man's sister, "Against the day of my burying hath he done this."

Thus then have we seen—dimly shadowed, it may be, in the case of some of them, but still more or less visible in all the members of the family of Bethany, as the result of their intercourse and fellowship with their beloved Lord—what we have ventured to call their divine education;—the illustration of that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart and overcometh the world:—in the case of Martha, making the life of bustle, and unrest, and fretting care, merge into calm thoughtfulness and unreasoning faith;—in the case of Mary, making the life of simple, childlike devotion develop itself into the activities of holiness;—in the case of Simon and of Lazarus, leading each, in his own way, to give proof, by the most expressive outward symbol, of their gratitude and joy and devoted attachment to the Person of their Divine Restorer.

Let us, in closing, inquire, as a practical question, Do

we know anything of that spiritual Resurrection, which is the key-note to the sublime discourse of the Bethany graveyard? I do not ask if we assent to the article of Martha's pharisee-creed—belief in a future physical resurrection. But do we believe in a nobler present spiritual one?—a higher life, in the Resurrection from the death of sin, of which, if a man once partake, he shall never cease to live? Death (what we call death) is the mere suspension, or temporary "taking to pieces," * of the bodily organism,—not the extinction of the true and nobler being. It is the breaking of the casket, but the gem is safe. It is the walls of the tottering building overturned, but the living, deathless tenant is safe. "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Believest thou in "life" despite of death—life, even while the King of terrors has stamped his mockery on the outward clay—living the imperishable life, which death only exalts, elevates, sublimates. Jesus, we read, "wept;" but these were not tears over the loss of a buried friend, for He, at least, knew well, that in a few brief moments, that friend would be restored at His side. Among the varied causes of these tears of Jesus, doubtless not the least, was the world's persistent unbelief of these grand truths He had been then unfolding: the groaning of His spirit, was His bitter, piteous lament over the impenitence and obduracy of a race of dying sinners; some of whom were then standing close by, ready (despite of the gigantic

* "This tabernacle were *dissolved*," (2 Cor. v. 1.) The reference is to the dismantling the tent,—rope, poles, and canvas; not destroyed, but "taken down" to be pitched anew elsewhere.

miracle transacted before them) to go straightway and plot His murder. Unbeliever of the present day! scorning, too, these transcendent utterances regarding what alone can meet and answer the deep needs of your spiritual being, there may at that moment have been, in these weeping eyes, a tear for *you!*

Reader, you who, perchance, know experimentally the reality of this present and deathless Resurrection, let me ask, If thus believing in Christ—if thus made partaker of this spiritual, the prelude to everlasting life,—what have you done—what are you doing for the Lord who died for you;—who has raised you from the death of sin, and who has enabled you to appropriate that noblest of truths, "Whosoever liveth, and believeth on me, shall never die"? Has your heart become a Bethany-home, gladdened by His presence? He was but the passing visitor at the Jewish village; but to each one of us, He is daily, and in manifold voices of His Word and Providence saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Let us bring him our pound of spikenard,—our linen covering (whatever we have) as a meet offering and pledge of grateful love. But for Him, tears more bitter far than those of the bereft sisters, must have been ours for ever: but for Him, ours must have been spiritual nakedness in the dark midnight of despair. But, blessed be His name—through His atoning death and great propitiation, "we, being clothed, shall not be found naked." Follow that crowd from Gethsemane to Calvary; see the buffeted One

and crucified One laid in the silent tomb! But, lo, it is left tenantless. The shroud and grave-clothes are "laid by themselves" on the rocky floor; the superincumbent stone is scattered in fragments at the grave's mouth, and the voice of victory is heard, 'Ye shall not be unclothed, but clothed upon, for mortality is swallowed up of life!'

VII.

The Mountain Oratory.

"AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT, AS HE WAS PRAYING IN A CERTAIN PLACE WHEN HE CEASED, ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES SAID UNTO HIM, LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY, AS JOHN ALSO TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES."—LUKE XI. 1.

"AND IN THE DAY TIME HE WAS TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE; AND AT NIGHT HE WENT OUT, AND ABODE IN THE MOUNT THAT IS CALLED THE MOUNT OF OLIVES."—LUKE XXI. 37.

"AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS, THAT HE WENT OUT INTO A MOUNTAIN (IN GALILEE) TO PRAY, AND CONTINUED ALL NIGHT IN PRAYER TO GOD." —LUKE VI.; MATT. XIV. 23.

"AND HE CAME OUT, AND WENT, AS HE WAS WONT, TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES; AND HIS DISCIPLES ALSO FOLLOWED HIM. AND WHEN HE WAS AT THE PLACE, HE SAID UNTO THEM, PRAY THAT YE ENTER NOT INTO TEMPTATION. AND HE WAS WITHDRAWN FROM THEM ABOUT A STONE'S CAST, AND KNEELED DOWN, AND PRAYED. . . . AND BEING IN AN AGONY, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY."—LUKE XXII. 39-44.

THE MOUNTAIN ORATORY.

THIS would seem the appropriate place for viewing OLIVET under one of its most interesting aspects—pondering one of the most fragrant of its memories—as THE ORATORY *of the Saviour*, the consecrated scene of His daily devotions. The "certain place" where He was "*praying*," spoken of in the first of these verses, immediately follows the account of His earliest recorded visit to Bethany, (Luke x. 38–42,)—as if, after leaving the hallowed home of Lazarus and his sisters, and before crossing the Kedron-gorge to Jerusalem, He retired to some well-known and frequented spot on the Mount, to get His holy human soul braced and strengthened for the duties and the trials of the day.

We are not, however, left to mere conjecture on the subject of the Saviour's habitual devotions, and how, above all, He loved the solitude of the mountain, in order to hold prayerful communion with His Father in Heaven. It was so in northern Palestine, amid the scenes of His most frequent resort and unremitting labour. Those green, lonely hills, which girdle the now desert and deserted Sea of Galilee, are still, to every devout mind, the remains of a nobler altar of Incense than ever was upreared in Tabernacle or Temple. For there Jesus, once and again, "went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God," (Luke vi. 12.) When His disciples were tossed below

on the stormy lake, He was watching, on His knees, their tempest-driven bark—"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone," (Matt. xiv. 23.) And when "in the fourth watch of the night He came to them walking on the sea," it was like the High Priest of their waning dispensation, coming forth from the Holy of Holies—from holding converse with the Infinite—to still their fears with His Heavenly benediction! (Num. vi. 26.)

The eye wanders now in vain around the solitary mountains fringing the shores of Gennesaret, in quest of any one cherished height, which, more probably than others, formed the scene of these hallowed vigils. Their number and variety precludes any identification of the favoured and favourite Oratory. But if it be so in Galilee—around Tiberias and Capernaum—not so at Jerusalem. Even had the Evangelists given no indication of the "certain place," there is but *one* mountain nigh 'the city of the great King' where such retirement and seclusion was possible,—that mount is THE MOUNT OF OLIVES. Thither He "ofttimes resorted," (John xviii. 2.) He went, "as He was wont," (Luke xxi. 37.) If few of these Olivet prayers have been recorded, we know at least two of them,—one with strong probability, the other with certainty. The one is the model prayer of universal Christendom, the formula for His Church in all ages, the twice-taught Lord's Prayer,—(Matt. vi. 9; Luke xi. 2,)—the other, of which we shall in a subsequent 'Memory' come to speak, is the prayer of the Agony—the prayer which left Gethsemane's green sod be-

dewed with drops of blood, as the exponent of the fierceness and intensity of that soul-struggle. We have good reason to believe, that OLIVET was to the devout Jews—citizens of Jerusalem—a frequent resort for devotion;—that those sequestered hollows, now so bleak and bare, were once, not only studded with olive groves and orchards, but in many of them were to be found "oratories," buildings specially erected and employed for stated prayer. Is the surmise unlikely, that one of these, in the Garden of Gethsemane, was "*the* certain place"—the spot of "oft resort"—which, when the mighty city, close by, was hushed in midnight silence, listened to the divine pleadings of the adorable Redeemer? If so, we can understand why it was, that, when "every man went unto his own house, Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives," (John vii. 53, viii. 1;) and that more than once, of that sacred retirement amid its overshadowing trees, He would say to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." There is an Eastern tradition that the leaves of the palm-tree, as they quiver in the breeze, whisper the name of Jesus. It may be more truly said of the Gethsemane olive-leaves, that they have listened to His prayers.

And surely there is something touching and amazing in the very statement of the fact, that *Jesus prayed!* He, as Immanuel, God in our nature; in Himself all-sufficient; a Treasure-house of every blessing; in whose arm omnipotence slumbered; whose voice could still the tempest and summon back from Hades the sheeted dead; above the exigencies of want, as He was beyond the reach of sin; a stranger, moreover, to all those fierce corruptions which war against the souls of His people:—yet, wondrous and affecting truth, *the*

Saviour prays! and that too, at times, "with strong crying and tears." For observe, we are not at present regarding Him as He stands before us in His sublime sacerdotal prayer in the 17th chapter of St John; or as we think of Him, as He now is, at His Father's right hand, the pleading Intercessor, praying for others. We restrict our thoughts to the personal element, that He prayed *for Himself.* Let no one suppose that it savours of irreverence, or derogates from the glory and dignity of the adorable Redeemer, by thus so identifying Him with our poor weaknesses as to think of Him in the attitude of a Suppliant—a nightly Petitioner—seeking at the hand of His Father fresh supplies of strength, and coming forth invigorated and refreshed from His season of devout communion. All this only indicates, with a more beautiful and touching impressiveness, the reality of His humanity, and is fraught with lessons of precious consolation. It tells—far more vividly than any doctrinal statement can do—that that kneeling Form, revealed by the moonbeams or bright eastern starlight amid the groves of OLIVET, is indeed the Brother in our nature—compassed, not with like passions, but with like infirmities—"in all points tempted even as we are"—rising from His knees braced for duty, prepared for trial. As "the Son of man," prayer was a necessity of His humanity; moreover, as the sinless One, with a nature which not only had no affinity with evil, but an infinite recoil from it, there must have been struggles in a world of sin,—an agony of endurance of which *we* can form no adequate conception, and which required, therefore, all the stronger divine supports and solaces.

And to pass to another view of these daily devotions,—regarding them, not as a necessity but as a blessed privilege,—what comfort and joy must it have imparted, amid the coldness and thanklessness of an ungenial world, to repair with filial love and confidence to unburden and unbosom into the ear of His Father the sorrows that were crushing His spirit, and to yield up His soul in reverential submission to the will of Him that sent Him? Condescending to pitch his tent amid human encampments, ("The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (lit. *tabernacled*) among us," John i. 14,) prayer was to Him, what the Elim-palms and fountains were to Israel of old,—giving refreshment and shade in the midst of earth's bleak desert, "the dry and thirsty land where no water is." It was "the brook by the way," of which He drank; and which enabled Him, even when crossing to the hour of trial and conflict, to "lift up the head," (Ps. cx. 7.) Of this Pilgrim of pilgrims it could be truly said, with reference to these devotions, "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools," (Ps. lxxxiv. 6.) As He went forth, evening after evening, from the din and turmoil, the sins and sorrows of the city, amid the glades of silent lonely OLIVET—the door of earth shut and the gates of heaven unbarred—He could say, in a truer sense than the sorrow-stricken Singer of Israel, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!" (Ps. xlii. 1, 2.)

But while thus carefully including the *personal* element in these prayers of the Great Pleader, yet neither must we overlook or omit the *intercessory*. This true "Prince," who

had "power with God and prevailed" for Himself, prevailed also for His people. The true Covenant Angel of Revelation first filled the golden censer which He now waves with the "much incense" and "the prayers of all the saints"* before the throne, amid the mountains of Galilee, or the dells of OLIVET. There is a beautiful and striking verse, in which the Incarnate Saviour is represented "morning by morning" as receiving a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost, His tongue touched anew with living fire;—His Heavenly Father "waking Him" at early dawn from His slumbers, that, in that first hour—that Sabbath hour of the day—He might have His lips and His soul plenished with words in season for the weary:—"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned," (Is. l. 4.) It is interesting thus to think of Him in these morning hours—these matins—amid the silence and solitude of nature, bringing to the Ear that was ever attentive to the voice of His supplication, each individual case foreseen by His prescient glance, of the weary and heavy-laden, the bereaved and desolate, the backsliding, the erring, the lost; and receiving balm-words of comfort—"words in season" suitable for each. It is interesting to think of the Great Shepherd thus "calling His own sheep by name;"—calling not *to* them but *for* them; and thus "leading them out"—leading them out of trials and temptations, rescuing them from otherwise certain and irrecoverable falls. Of this we

* Rev. viii. 3. "All *the* saints"—the prayers of the "144,000," spoken of in the preceding context—the representatives of the whole Church.

have an apposite illustration in the case of the wavering Peter:—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for THEE, that thy faith fail not," (Luke xxii. 31, 32.) Peter stood the assault. His faith, sorely shattered, remained unscathed. But how? May we not possibly trace the reason to one of these midnight or early morning prayers on OLIVET, (the resort to which is specially spoken of in St Luke's preceding chapter,) in which that unstable one—that "reed shaken with the wind"—may have been made the subject of Divine intercession? And so also, may we suppose, in the case of other recipients of the Redeemer's grace and mercy. Who knows, but it was prayer on one of those lonely hills on the shores of Gennesaret, which led the Apostle Fishermen to abandon their homes at Bethsaida, or induced Matthew so readily to relinquish his receipt of custom, or impelled "the woman from the city"—the weariest of the weary—to rush, weeping and penitent, to the feet of the Great Restorer? Who knows but it was some prayer on the Perean mountains, that softened the heart of the exacting tax-gatherer of Jericho—brought Zaccheus down from his seat in the sycamore tree, to abandon for ever his accursed gains, and to cast in his lot with the Prophet of Nazareth? In His own final struggle in Gethsemane, (Himself now 'the Weary One,') may not the strengthening Angel have been sent in special answer to that agony of supplication? May not the thief on the cross—the last trophy of Redeeming love, ere these lips of love were sealed in death—may not that repenting felon have been a trophy of *prayer*—his name included in that sublimest of Litanies shortly before uttered: "Father, I will that they also, whom

thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me"? (John xvii. 24.) Nay, farther, if any one of *us* have either been delivered from some strong overmastering temptation, or have had consolations administered to our weary sorrowing spirits in some hour of sore trial,—is the thought too bold or too fanciful, that we may, in part at least, owe the deliverance or the solace to Christ's orisons on OLIVET; that then and there, there may have been a tearful, sympathising petition for *us*? *His* intercessions were not, like ours, limited to the present: the race of living contemporary men had no monopoly in His pleadings. To His omniscient eye the whole future was unveiled; and *in* that future, every heart history—the struggles and trials of each soul He had ransomed with His blood. Yes, that all-comprehensive glance may have included *you* who now trace these lines. These silent groves around Gethsemane may have listened once and again to that beautiful and comforting clause in His most fully recorded intercession—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word," (John xvii. 20.)

Delightful thought, alike for the Church collectively and for believers individually. If there be "a Book of remembrance written, for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name;" and if, even in the case of His weak and erring children, "the Lord hearkens and hears," (Mal. iii. 16,) how much more ready, surely, would that Almighty Listener be, to attend to the cry of this midnight Suppliant! How, we may imagine, would the Recording angel hover over these divine vigils, waiting with outspread wing to bear the

intercessions up to "the Book of remembrance;" and when the first ray of early dawn was gilding the temple-pinnacles, saying, as of old to the wrestler of Jabbok, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Oh, matchless, self-sacrificing, devoted love! Before His own great type in the firmament had appeared over the mountains of Moab, He, the true Sun of Righteousness, had risen with healing in His beams; or rather, as the shadows of evening fell, inviting a weary world to repose, (and none, too, in that weary world more needing it than He,) this Heavenly King and Priest of His Church—His head wet with dew and His locks with the drops of the night—is heard exclaiming, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense," (Sol. Song iv. 6.)

I conclude with one practical view of the subject, suggested by the second verse which precedes this chapter. It is the beautiful union in the Saviour's life of the active with the devotional. "In the day-time He was teaching in the Temple:" there is the active. "And at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives:" here is the devotional element.

Looking at the first of these: His was a life of consecrated work. Not the existence of the dreamy contemplatist—sentimental pietism, mere saintliness, dissevered from duty. "My Father *worketh* hitherto, and I work," was His motto, His rule, His practice. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Although, doubtless, breathing a

constant atmosphere of prayer, maintaining unintermitted communion with Heaven, His public labours, during the twelve hours of the day, seem seldom to have been suspended in order to indulge in the refreshment of oral devotion, far less of mere physical rest. Once we read of Him saying to His disciples—as if conscious that a special emergency had occurred, in which both He and they required a pause for their overtasked energies—"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while," (Mark vi. 31.) On another occasion, after a day of ceaseless toil, we find wearied nature asserting her sway over that exhausted frame, and the Incarnate Redeemer lies with His head on 'a coil of ropes for His pillow,' fast asleep in the boat of the Bethsaida fishermen. But these exceptional seasons of constrained repose, only serve to bring out, in stronger relief, the ceaseless energies and activities of His holy being. How diversified these "day-labours!" In the Temple, in the street, on the wayside: by word, by parable, by miracle, by sympathy, by tears; restoring the sick, comforting the mourner, healing the deeper heart-wounds of sin; "who went about continually doing good."

Turn now to the other phase in this life of ideal perfection. The existence of Jesus was not all Work. The active, was beautifully blended and intermingled with the devotional. The teaching "in the day-time in the Temple" had its sublime counterpart and complement, in the nightly devotions on "the mount called the Mount of Olives." Prayer, as we have already seen, was needed as much to refresh the soul of the Son of man, as repose was required to recruit and invigorate His body. He has set for ever

His own consecrated mark and seal on special times and seasons for devotion. Prayer sanctified every event in His public ministry, from the hour of its commencement at His baptism, till the awful moment at the close of all, when, on the breath of prayer, He yielded up the Ghost;—"Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." And in this respect He stands before us, the all-perfect model and example for His people to imitate. *Christians*—those bearing His name—should, by some humble approximation at least, have the like combination—the one interlacing the other—of activity and devotion, work and worship. Maintaining their assigned and relative proportion, these should be, in the spiritual economy, what the nice equipoise and adjustment of the two great forces is in the material world, by which the planets are retained in their courses and move in obedient harmony to their controlling central luminary; or, to employ another illustration, they should be, in the Christian life, what the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, were to the Temple of old, "Beauty" and "Strength,"—the *strength* for daily duty being derived from "worshipping the Lord in the *beauty* of holiness," (Ps. xxix. 2.) The lamp must burn; but it must have the oil to feed it. On the other hand, the oil, good in itself, is worthless, if it be only treasured in vessels, stored unused in the soul's reservoir, and the lamp of life unlighted. This same truth—the composite character of the spiritual being—is beautifully set forth in Isaiah's sublime Temple-vision of the seraphim: "Each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet," (Isa. vi. 2.) Four of these wings were thus in an attitude of holy rest, (emblem

of the devotional,) covering face and feet. The remaining two were outstretched, plumed for flight, "With twain he did fly,"—(the equally significant symbol of activity)—telling that these reposeful worshippers were also "ministering spirits," employed in active embassies in the service of their Heavenly King. And as if their Lord, moreover, too well knew that the Church and believers were readier for the active than for the devotional, readier for the Temple-work than for retirement to the Olivet of prayer, He gives the priority in the description, as well as the double proportion, to the latter element.*

And is it not so? Take the case, first, of individuals. Is it not too true that many there are, ready to take the seraphs' outspread wing of service, who are not so ready to take the reposeful folding one? We have sought to draw, in the preceding chapter, the distinctive features in the character of the two sisters at Bethany. Martha was one of earth's flying seraphim. In her character, there was an undue proportion at least, of the active and practical and bustling, compared with the meditative and devotional. She had the wings to fly, but not so beautifully as her sister Mary, the wings of restful love. We do not depreciate Martha's character;—would we had more such,—who, instead of living and dying with wings collapsed, opportunities for usefulness guiltily neglected, speed, seraph-like, from place to place with the living embers of Christian activity. But better, because rarer, are the Marys, who have begun with the devotional, and made that the *substratum* of their reli-

* See this passage and subject excellently illustrated in Dr Goulburn's "Thoughts on Personal Religion," p. 30.

gious character and life. Train the wings to be folded at the foot of the mercy-seat: in other words, let religion begin in the heart, and be nurtured by daily prayer, and no fear of the flying pinions of consecrated energy. The love of God, shed abroad in the heart of "the burning ones," will irresistibly prompt and impel to holy duty. To the question, heard by the same prophet-spectator of the Seraphim-vision, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" the answer will sooner or later be given, by the lips touched with the live-coal, "Here am I, send me," (Isa. vi. 8.)

And what is true of believers in their individual, is equally true of them in their collective capacity. The Church, in these our days, needs no exhortation to follow her Lord "in the day-time" to the busy teaching in the Temple. "The Temple of the Lord—the Temple of the Lord are we!" is the too loudly vaunted watchword of this age of "bustling Christianity." No longer can it be said now, as of the suggestive silence which accompanied the erection of the great sanctuary on Mount Moriah, "There was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building," (1 Kings vi. 7.) The modern temple-court is resonant with voice and footstep and noise of busy implements. But does the Church follow her Lord with equal fidelity into the solitudes of *Olivet?* Or rather, does she not require to be reminded of the word addressed to another Kingly Temple-builder, "This is the word of God unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts"? (Zech. iv. 6.) If she have reason to utter a plaintive lament over doctrinal defection, decaying zeal, languishing spirituality,

me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened," (Luke xi. 5–10.)

VIII.

The Message to Bethphage.

"AND WHEN THEY DREW NIGH UNTO JERUSALEM, AND WERE COME TO BETHPHAGE, UNTO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, THEN SENT JESUS TWO DISCIPLES, SAYING UNTO THEM, GO INTO THE VILLAGE OVER AGAINST YOU, AND STRAIGHTWAY YE SHALL FIND AN ASS TIED, AND A COLT WITH HER: LOOSE THEM, AND BRING THEM UNTO ME. AND IF ANY MAN SAY AUGHT UNTO YOU, YE SHALL SAY, THE LORD HATH NEED OF THEM; AND STRAIGHTWAY HE WILL SEND THEM."—MATT. XXI. 1-3.

"AND WHEN THEY CAME NIGH TO JERUSALEM, UNTO BETHPHAGE AND BETHANY, AT THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, HE SENDETH FORTH TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES, AND SAITH UNTO THEM, GO YOUR WAY INTO THE VILLAGE OVER AGAINST YOU: AND AS SOON AS YE BE ENTERED INTO IT, YE SHALL FIND A COLT TIED, WHEREON NEVER MAN SAT; LOOSE HIM, AND BRING HIM. AND IF ANY MAN SAY UNTO YOU, WHY DO YE THIS? SAY YE THAT THE LORD HATH NEED OF HIM; AND STRAIGHTWAY HE WILL SEND HIM HITHER. AND THEY WENT THEIR WAY, AND FOUND THE COLT TIED BY THE DOOR WITHOUT, IN A PLACE WHERE TWO WAYS MET; AND THEY LOOSE HIM. AND CERTAIN OF THEM THAT STOOD THERE SAID UNTO THEM, WHAT DO YE, LOOSING THE COLT? AND THEY SAID UNTO THEM EVEN AS JESUS HAD COMMANDED: AND THEY LET THEM GO. AND THEY BROUGHT THE COLT TO JESUS, AND CAST THEIR GARMENTS ON HIM; AND HE SAT UPON HIM. AND MANY SPREAD THEIR GARMENTS IN THE WAY; AND OTHERS CUT DOWN BRANCHES OFF THE TREES, AND STRAWED THEM IN THE WAY."—MARK XI. 1-8.

LUKE XIX. 28-34.

THE MESSAGE TO BETHPHAGE.

It was now six days before the Passover. Our Blessed Lord, after a brief sojourn at Jericho, had spent the Jewish Sabbath previous to His death, at the mountain Home, in the endeared society of the Family of Bethany. He reached it, probably after sunset, on the day of the week corresponding to our Friday; according, too, in that holy month of the Hebrews, with our 27th of March,—the 7th of Nisan. The Sabbatic hours which followed, formed the last hallowed day of complete seclusion and rest preparatory to the awful and momentous events of the week on which He was about to enter. As the evening shadows of that Sabbath were falling, multitudes, attracted by His culminating miracle in the raising of Lazarus, were flocking out from Jerusalem to see with their own eyes this wondrous Conqueror of death, and the visible trophy of His power in the person of the restored villager. The morning brought fresh accessions to these enthusiastic crowds, who were thus, as we shall find in next chapter, unwittingly preparing to fulfil an ancient prophecy of one of their own seers, by forming a triumphant body-guard and retinue for the royal entrance of Zion's King.

The procession, probably after midday,* was preparing to set out. We may imagine it had already left the little

* Gresswell supposes it to be about the ninth hour, or three P.M.

village embosomed in its groves of palm, branches of which may have been already cut down, in anticipation of the coming ovation. The crowd, alike from Bethany and from the city, is swollen by the caravans of pilgrims, hastening to the feast from Perea and the Jordan valley. All at once there is a pause. Two of His disciples are despatched to a village "over against," by name Bethphage, in order to fetch, for purposes not at first defined in the message, an ass and its colt. To a certain extent the site of this village is conjectural, but we can with confidence include it in the Olivet memories, as occupying a ridge of 'the Mount,' and close, too, by the track which the procession was about to pursue.*

* *Bethphage* is literally "*the house of unripe or early figs.*" Dr Barclay identifies it with the ruins of a village on the southern crest of "The Mount of Offence," above the village of Siloam. He describes it as "a tongue-shaped promontory or spur of Olivet, distant rather more than a mile from the city, situated between two deep valleys, on which there are tanks, foundations, and other indubitable evidences of the former existence of a village." After a careful comparison with the synoptical narrative, he continues, "This view of the position of Bethphage is also fully confirmed by the etymological import of the term, as far as it can be supposed to bear upon the subject. Being so well sheltered from northerly winds, and enjoying so fine a south-eastern and western exposure, it must needs have been well adapted to the production of early figs."—*City of the Great King*, pp. 66, 67. Dr Buchanan, whose deductions are always careful and trustworthy, mentions in his "Clerical Furlough" having fixed on this as the most probable site, before being aware that Dr Barclay had done the same. I regret now, I did not avail myself of the opportunity of personally inspecting the precise locality;—but the direction, indeed the spot, is visible from the Hosanna road; and I have no hesitation in expressing accordance with the above reliable authorities. By Eusebius and Jerome the place was known, and also by Origen, though no indication of its position is given. By the former it is called κώμη, by Jerome *Villula*. In his account of the travels of the Roman lady Paula, he mentions that she had visited it. They describe it as a Village of the Priests, possibly from "Bethphage" signifying in Syriac "The House of the Jaw;" and the jaw

The disciples, without remonstrance, execute their commission. On the sole plea addressed to the owners—"The Lord hath need of them"—the two animals are led to the spot where the procession waited their return.

It was an embassy this, strangely at variance with the wont of their Heavenly Master. On no other occasion in all His public ministry, do we find Him courting publicity; nor, indeed, so far as we know, did He ever before even employ the help of an animal in His long and tedious journeys under a Palestine sun. There seemed the less necessity for any such adventitious aid at the present time—as Bethany had just ministered to Him a Sabbath-day's physical rest, and Jerusalem, the place of destination, was scarce three miles distant from where He sent the disciples on their mysterious errand. We shall not now anticipate, but leave for the following chapter, the reasons which led the Divine Redeemer, in the present instance, to depart from His invariable preference to remain an undistinguished wayfarer. The enthusiasm of the people gathered from all parts of the land, was stirred to its depths, and He did nothing to repress or discourage it; on the contrary, as we shall find, He seemed rather to court the plaudits of that exulting throng. Meanwhile, however, let us, too, pause for a little, and gather a few lessons from this interesting incident, before we proceed with the jubilant crowd along their path of triumph.

Let us advert to the testimony this portion of Scripture

in the sacrifices being the portion of the priests, (Reland, 653.)—*See Smith's Dict. of Bible, art. Bethphage; also Thrupp's Ancient Jerusalem*, p. 217.

offers, alike to the earthly humiliation and to the divine glory of Jesus—to His Humanity and His Divinity.

It is remarkable how frequently, in the course of His public ministry, these two are combined. Indeed there are comparatively few events of importance, during His Incarnation, but in which we have this juxtaposition of majesty and lowliness, the attributes and evidences alike of Godhead and manhood. "The Child born," the "Son given," yet "the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father;" "Immanuel, God with us"—'our God yet our Brother, our Brother yet our God!' When He came into the world—it was an infant of days, a helpless babe in a lowly cradle;—yet, at that natal hour, a mystic star, the symbol of royalty, was seen in the firmament, and choirs of angels descended to Bethlehem's valley, to sing "Glory to the new-born King." At His baptism in Jordan, we see an apparently humble Galilean, 'receiving a sinner's rite at a sinner's hands:' but, lo! the heavens are opened, and an audible voice attests His Deity. At the well of Jacob, we behold a travel-worn Pilgrim resting His weary frame "as best He could," and asking for a cup of cold water: but that Samaritan He has redeemed with His blood, bears witness to His omniscience, as one that "told her all things that ever she did." At the grave of Lazarus, we behold, one moment, a weeping man;—the next, the omnipotent Lord of life summoning back by a word the sheeted dead. At the final scene of all, we see a tortured martyr transfixed in agony to the bitter tree, apparently powerless to rebut the scoffer's taunt—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save:" yet nature awakes to resent the insult, and to vindicate His dishonoured glory:

the sun puts on robes of sackcloth, and the earth heaves convulsed, as if it trembled to support the cross on which its expiring Creator hung.

In the passage we are now to consider, we have the same conjunction of greatness and condescension — the majesty of the Divine and the lowliness of the human. We shall presently note the unmistakable proofs and tokens of Deity. But even in this hour of temporary triumph — the only occasion on which a halo of earthly glory encircles the brow that is soon to be crowned with thorns—He appears before us "as one that serveth." Though, as Jehovah, He had an indisputable claim to all the possessions of His creatures—though His were "the cattle on a thousand hills"—at the very outset of the royal procession He puts himself in the position of a recipient, sending two of His disciples to get from a lowly villager the loan of two lowly animals. By one omnific mandate, Mount Olivet might easily have been made, like the mountain at Dothan, as seen by the servant of Elisha, full of horses and chariots to grace the triumph of a greater than "Solomon in all his glory." But as the humble Nazarene—who had a borrowed cradle at his birth, and is soon to have a borrowed grave — He is content, on this occasion also, to dispense with dazzling pomp of circumstance. Though it is as a "King" He is foretold as "coming;" it is also "meek and lowly," a 'Pilgrim among pilgrims.' No emblazoned banners wave over His head, no jewelled crown, no sacred oil, no golden sceptre or spangled vestments proclaim His royalty; no prancing steeds, no caparisoned war horses drag Him along in triumphal car. An unhon-

oured animal, belonging to a neighbouring villager, serves the purpose of Him who came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." As a servant of servants, the Lord of all sends "two of His disciples, saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which, at your entering, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither," (Luke xix. 30.)

But this incident affords also an attestation to *the divinity of Jesus.*

It tells, first, of His *omniscience.* In sending His disciples to the owner of the animals at Bethphage, He gives minute particulars as to how and where they were to be found. It was to be "at the entering in of the village." There was to be "an ass and its colt." They were to be "tied"—"tied without, by a door;" and the spot was further marked as being "at a place where two ways met," (Mark xi. 4.) He forewarns of the question or challenge with which the request would be received, and the success which would attend it.

Note further, in conjunction with the omniscience, the *sovereign power* of the Saviour. He swayed the heart of that owner at Bethphage. It was in itself a startling, an unreasonable demand made to a stranger, to give up his property at the bidding of two humble men of Galilee. But "the Lord hath need of them." That was enough. Instead of demurring to the request, or treating as an insult the peremptory demand for what was his and not theirs, he cheerfully assents, and sends the two animals along with them. And observe, moreover, the present was unlike many of Christ's other miracles. In these, He was Himself personally present, His

own mighty utterances forming part of the scene: as, for example, at Cana of Galilee, at the funeral of Nain, and at the graveyard of Bethany. But here, He remains at a distance,—leaves the interview to His disciples—influences the will of the owner through the intervention of others.

How comforting to us is this combined Omniscience and Omnipotence of Jesus! and more especially now that He is at a distance from His Church, and acting through the instrumentality of His ministers on earth. He appeared purposely Himself to withdraw, and delegated others to transact with this villager, in order to assure His people in every age, that distance does not limit or impair His sovereign power. And He would seem desirous, by several of His miracles, to establish this same truth, that His will and word are as efficacious afar off as they are near. See His power at a distance over *matter*, when He hung upon the cross: the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, the rocks were riven, and the sun was darkened. See His power at a distance over the *lower animals*,—summoning the fish with the coin in its mouth from the depths of Gennesaret; or, as in the present instance, leading the ass and its colt to "the place where two ways met." See His power exercised at a distance over the *human body*—in the raising of the centurion's son, or of the Syrophenician's daughter. And see, as the culminating exercise of this distant power, His influence over *mind*, in swaying the will and heart of a Bethphage villager, to surrender in a moment his property at the summons, "The Lord hath need of them." We know how apt we are to indulge the thought, how privileged we should have been were Jesus now moving in the midst of us: were we allowed

to hear His loving voice, and to behold His wondrous deeds, how many more tears would be dried, and sorrows soothed, and death-beds averted, and careless hearts touched and melted. But though withdrawn from sight on the heavenly Mount, His omniscient eye is still upon us. He knows our frame,—He marks our trials,—He puts our tears into His bottle,—He speaks, and it is done. The disciples themselves —these humble, uncouth fishermen—could have had poor success in making so startling a demand for the surrender of property. But there was a mightier Power influencing that stranger's soul. "The Lord, who had need of them," turned his heart even as He turneth the rivers of water. And though now removed to a distance from His Church on earth, "His hand is not shortened that it cannot save." All that concerns us and ours is at His disposal. If He could thus act on a poor man's heart, even in what was comparatively a small matter,—if He condescended to employ His power through others, even to the inducing to part with two lowly animals,—how much more will He delight to exercise His sovereignty in controlling higher things for His own glory and for His people's good! "A sparrow falleth not to the ground without your heavenly Father knowing of it. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Let us not, then, in our unbelief, "limit the Holy One of Israel," or imagine because Christ is not personally present with His Church and its members, He must be less intimately acquainted with their sorrows, and less able to minister to their wants. Let us not say, in the spirit of the bereft sisters of Bethany, 'Lord, if thou hadst been here, this my

brother—my friend—my child had not died.' By the present miracle on Olivet, He tells us, He is never "far from any one of us;" that He is still, though invisibly, yet really nigh the sick man in his chamber—the mourner in his tears—the stricken sinner in the agony of conviction. Distance is nothing to an ever-present Saviour. Seated on the everlasting hills, "crowned with glory and honour," there is no change in His heart of everlasting love. The parting legacy He bequeathed to all time, still rings its endless and multiplying echoes, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Let us now, for a little, pass from the consideration of our Saviour's part in this episode in the triumphal entrance, to the conduct of the Villager who owned the animals. He seems at first to have remonstrated, "Why loose ye the colt?" He thought it (as well he might) a strange demand. But when he heard the argument, "The Lord hath need of them;" his objections were silenced, and, without hesitation, he "loosed them, and let them go."

It is impossible to say whether or not that owner at Bethphage was a disciple of the Redeemer's. By the term "THE LORD," it is generally supposed he may have simply understood the Lord God of Israel—the God of his fathers.* As a Jew

* Alford says, "ὁ κύριος, here, 'the LORD' '*Jehovah*:' most probably an intimation to the owners, that they were wanted *for the service of God* . . the Lord JEHOVAH." (Greek Test. *in loc.*) Scott, in his Commentary, adopts the same view, 'The Lord of all.' See also Middleton on the Greek article. Olshausen and Stier, however, think otherwise. "At all events," says the latter, "more is here meant than merely 'our Master,' (ὁ διδάσκλος;) in the sense in which Christ uses this name it borders on the designation of *the King Messiah*."—Stier, vol. iii. p. 86.

—a worshipper of this God—he acknowledged "His sovereignty over him and His propriety in him." The man felt that the animals, in the earthly sense of "property," were his own;—that none had a title to challenge his right to them. But as a pious Hebrew, he acknowledged that, in a nobler and higher sense, they were not his—that he had them on lease from a Mightier than earthly proprietor. They belonged to Him who says, "All the beasts of the forest are mine." When Jehovah's interests were mentioned, by a beautiful faith he at once owned the superior servitude, and "rendered to God the things that were God's."

What a lesson here for us! How apt we are to live independent of the Divine hand, as if our blessings were our own — health, wealth, friends, substance, instead of entering into the spirit of the king of Israel, when, at the consecration of the Temple, he uttered the sublime confession over the munificent offerings, "*All is of thee*, and of thine own, O God, have we given thee." Seek to realise and to acknowledge, in all you have, the ownership of a Greater. Have you wealth? *God* has given it you; and when it is demanded, regard it not as your own, but needful for His cause, and straightway "send it." Is your substance taken away? Let this comfort you, "The Lord hath need of it" —need of it for your sakes, to wean you from earth, and lead you to lay up your treasure in Heaven. Or, is it dealings more mysterious still? Why is that life of consecrated activity suddenly paralysed,— noble resolves and nobler deeds repressed and arrested by years of familiarity with the darkened chamber and pining sickness,—the bird, soaring once on buoyant pinion and singing up to Heaven's

gate, now with broken wing struggling in the furrow? 'Oh how willing,' many such an one is ready to exclaim—'how willing should I be, to join in that triumphal march,' to spread my garment, cut down my palm-branch, and shout my Hosanna! Sad to hear these notes of praise preparing to ring around the valleys of Zion, while I am debarred from having any part in the festive throng. "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day,"' (Ps. xlii. 4.) Nay, sick one, whom Jesus loves, 'the Lord hath need of thee,'—yes, need of just such mute worshippers as you are. Remember, He can listen to the heart-song, though no branch is waved in the hand, and no hosanna vibrates on the tongue. The trophies of His triumphal march are not confined to the palms and garments which strew the highway of Olivet. They that tarry at home may divide the spoil. He who thus enters the gates of Zion will not forget the lowly dwellings of Jacob; wherefore, comfort one another with these words, "This sickness is . . . for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." While He "hath need" of some strong-handed and trumpet-tongued in His Church to fight His battles, proclaim His praise, and prepare His way, He "needs" others, too, unarrayed in festive attire, unequal to the fatigues of the public procession, curtained within "the tents of Kedar,"—He needs such—He *loves* such, to glorify Him. Undemonstrative, passive resignation; unfretting, unmurmuring submission to His will, is as grateful to Him as the jubilant shout of the great congregation. Why, above all,

that deathbed? Why that Isaac laid on the altar of sacrifice? Why that Lazarus, in the pride of youthful manhood, stretched on that mysterious shroud? Why that loving and useful life lost prematurely to the Church and the world? The seared and withered leaves of autumn drop in their season to the ground; but why this withering of the early blossom,—this abnormal falling of the green and tender foliage? "The Lord hath need of them." Are there no flowers needed to waft their perfume and swing their censers in the gardens of immortality? Are there no "ministering ones" needed in the Sanctuary above? Yes. If there are no battles there to fight—no armour to prove—no "Harps on the willows" forbidding to sing the Lord's song as in the strange land below,—there are noble embassies of active service in which are embarked the unresting energies of the glorified. Christian mourner! who, it may be, art now lamenting over your withered flowers—the blanks at your table—the music of cherished voices hushed for the for ever of time—too truly you may feel, day by day, in the depths of your lone, aching heart, how ill you could spare—how much *you* had "need" of 'the loved and lost.' But take this as the explanation—let all murmurs be stilled to silence by the higher claim and claimant, "The *Lord* hath need" of the crowned and glorified. At such deathbeds of those we love, we are too apt, like Jacob with the angel at Jabbok, in the agony of nature's fond struggle, to say, "We will not let thee go;"—oh, as the wing is pluming for its immortal flight, let the gentle whisper come to us rebuking all tears, "Let me go, for the day breaketh;"—let me go, for "the Lord hath need of me;"—"If ye

loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto my Father."

Would, then, there were always such simple acquiescence in God's will, as in the case of this owner of Bethphage! He asks no questions—he pries no further into the reasons of the Lord's "need;" he raises no fresh doubts or difficulties. The providential messages of God are often puzzling and perplexing. Severe afflictions at times come, like these two apostles to Bethphage, asking us to make surrender of what flesh and blood is unwilling to part with. Often to our poor blind, short-sighted vision, we can see no reason for the sacrifice—no call to give up what we fondly prize. Alas! we only have the one-sided view. We cannot judge of the infinite reasons hidden from our gaze, and known only to the Infinitely *wise* ONE. We never should judge prematurely and rashly of an incompleted plan, even on earth. Why disturb those lovely fields, and make rude gashes in those smiling valleys? Wait with your verdict till science finishes her work, and thousands are seen to speed along the iron highway. Why disturb the virgin marble slumbering in earth's bosom, leaving unsightly seams and scars in its native quarry? Wait till you see that unwieldy block a piece of breathing sculpture in the artist's studio. Why does Hiram send his hewers to deface and mutilate the glories of Lebanon? why should the denizens of her forest fall to the merciless axe? would not these cedars have been, better far, left as a diadem of glory on her majestic brow—for the birds of the air to nestle in the branches, or the panting gazelle to slumber under their shadow? Nay, "*the Lord hath need of them.*" They were beautiful in the Temple of nature, but He has a higher

need of them in the Temple of grace—His holy and beautiful house at Jerusalem. And, Reader, if, with regard to us, the axe be laid to the root of some favourite tree,—if the Lord, according to the expression of an old writer, 'have His tools upon us'—let us remember, in the words of the apostle, "He that hath *wrought* us for the selfsame thing is God." For "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," (Rom. viii. 28.)

The passage further teaches, that *each of us can, in some humble way, do service to the Saviour.* We cannot all give Him magnificent offerings, or have our names associated with magnificent deeds for the furtherance of His cause and kingdom; we cannot all be equipped with apostolic zeal and fervour; we cannot all, with a Luther spirit, be "heroes in the fight;"—but we can leave "footprints," to give heart and hope to the "shipwrecked brother." We can give the mite to the Treasury when we have neither the pound nor the talent; we can give the lowly animal when we have no other royal tribute. If we have not this, we can strew the garment on the way: and if even the garment be unworthy, poverty can cut down its own palm-branches—and with these, poverty's own offering, the symbol of willing spirit and loyal heart, we can swell the jubilant Hosanna!

It might have been (let us make, at all events, the supposition for a moment) that, with a stern and churlish negative, the disciples returned to their Lord from their unsuccessful mission to the dweller at Bethphage. Had it been so,

what an honour would that villager have missed! what an opportunity would he have forfeited of doing humble but acceptable service to the world's Redeemer! But at the summons, "The Lord hath need of them," he readily assents, "straightway" he makes the surrender: his name is added, in the Heavenly records, to the roll of those who are "faithful over a few things." What matters it that his was a lowly offering? He was asked to contribute but little. It may be he could *only* contribute that little to the service of the Saviour. His was not the honour which appertained to other followers of Jesus; his was not the noble self-surrender of the men of Bethsaida and Capernaum, who left their all for a life of undivided consecration. It involved no risk of name and repute, worldly interests and social position, as in the case of Nicodemus, who came, not in the hour of Hosanna and triumph, but in the hour of apparent defeat and despair, to beg from Pilate the body of his Lord; not even was it the constant devotion of the women of Galilee, who, like guardian angels, tracked His steps and ministered to Him of their substance; nor the costly proof Mary gave of her love, when, as we found at Bethany in the house of the restored leper, she broke her vase of precious nard—the most treasured of her possessions—and poured it ungrudgingly on His feet. It was, in the case of this man of Bethphage, a loan—no more. But it is enough:—he hath done what he could. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver;" and wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, there shall also this, which this nameless Benefactor hath done, be told for a memorial of him!

Reader, God's messengers come also from the Great

Master to us, with the demand for lowly service. Each of us may recall the time of their mission. It may have been the accredited ambassadors of the sanctuary; it may have been Providential voices requiring from us what possibly would involve sacrifice, but the doing of which would redound in glory to the Saviour, or for the good of His people. What have we done? What in each case has been our response to the demand? Have we accorded a welcome to the messengers and their message? or have we spurned them away,—and are we now in the position of those who *might* have done good service to Christ, but who have once —and, it may be, in some specific instances, who have for ever—missed the opportunity? Whether it be honouring the Lord with our substance and with the firstfruits of our increase; or whether it be simply giving the cup of cold water to a disciple in the Saviour's name in lack of other substance, it matters not. It is motive, which, irrespective of mere degree, dignifies action. The opportunity has come and gone—gone neglected. "Ye did it not to me," stands recorded against us in the Great Book. "Thou gavest me no water for my feet. . . . Thou gavest me no kiss. . . . My head with oil thou didst not anoint," (Luke vii. 44–46.) That Bethphage villager had but the one chance—no more. Had he denied the solicited boon, the possible willingness and regrets of to-morrow could not have atoned for the refusal of to-day. So with us; many are the opportunities which, neglected once, may not come again. The Saviour waits the passing hour; but if we deny,—if we even postpone His claim,—the Hosanna crowd may meanwhile sweep on, the occasion demanding the service is over—we have lost the

one chance, for ever! Let us again be warned by the case of His faithless guardians at Gethsemane, in an hour nigh at hand, whose drowsy vigils drew from the loving heart they had wounded, the words of deserved reproach we have commented on in a preceding chapter, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." 'Sleep on! the time was, when you might have watched,—when your wakeful sympathies would have given Me support and solace,—when your words of heart-cheer would have been of priceless value in the midst of My soul-struggle;—but the fight is ended—the victory is won—your opportunity in sharing it is past—"Sleep on now, and take your rest."' Oh, if at no other season, to how many do these reproaches for lost opportunities come at a deathbed! how many, even of His own true followers, leave the world with the tear in their eye and the throb in their heart—that, for the dear Lord who died for them, they have done so little, and might have done so much more!

And if there be yet one other lesson, ere we close, it is to those who are appointed as ministers of the everlasting Gospel; never to despond,—never to shrink from apparent impossibilities,—but to go fearlessly on, at the word, and in obedience to the command and authority of their great Master. Never apparently was there a more bootless, hopeless errand than that of these two disciples—going to ask a stranger to surrender two animals at the simple bidding, "The Lord hath need of them." They, too, might have been tempted to remonstrate—to shrink from this strange unwarrantable interference with another man's property, and to plead the almost absolute certainty of a refusal. But they went, *because*

Jesus bade them. "The Lord gave the word"—and they forthwith proceeded on their embassage.

What an encouragement to all of us who are the heralds of salvation, never to allow the hands to hang down or the knees to become feeble—never to deem any heart beyond the reach of divine saving power, or of a loving reception of the truth. He who sent His apostles with the sovereign message, still employs human instrumentality, and makes the very same "word" mightily efficacious. Vain, indeed, would many an embassage be, if we went on our own charges. But we are commissioned, like the disciples, by our Divine Redeemer. We are His heralds—His ambassadors; and He who influenced the will of that Bethphage villager, can subdue the most obdurate, and bring the most selfish and grasping, to glorious self-surrender to His own cause and service. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" In our moments of despondency, when the work at times seems vain and fruitless, may we have faith and boldness to say with Peter on another occasion, "Master, we have toiled all night, and caught nothing: NEVERTHELESS at thy word we will let down the net." We will go with Thy message, Lord; and though the world may scorn it, and the pride of reason reject it—and the pride of self-righteousness treat it with disdain, we shall trust the sure warrant, "My word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

IX.

The Triumphal Entry.

"AND WHEN THEY DREW NIGH UNTO JERUSALEM, AND WERE COME TO BETHPHAGE, UNTO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, THEN SENT JESUS TWO DISCIPLES, SAYING UNTO THEM, GO INTO THE VILLAGE OVER AGAINST YOU, AND STRAIGHTWAY YE SHALL FIND AN ASS TIED, AND A COLT WITH HER: LOOSE THEM, AND BRING THEM UNTO ME. AND IF ANY MAN SAY AUGHT UNTO YOU, YE SHALL SAY, THE LORD HATH NEED OF THEM; AND STRAIGHTWAY HE WILL SEND THEM. ALL THIS WAS DONE, THAT IT MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY THE PROPHET, SAYING, TELL YE THE DAUGHTER OF SION, BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE, MEEK, AND SITTING UPON AN ASS, AND A COLT THE FOAL OF AN ASS. AND THE DISCIPLES WENT, AND DID AS JESUS COMMANDED THEM, AND BROUGHT THE ASS, AND THE COLT, AND PUT ON THEM THEIR CLOTHES, AND THEY SET HIM THEREON. AND A VERY GREAT MULTITUDE SPREAD THEIR GARMENTS IN THE WAY; OTHERS CUT DOWN BRANCHES FROM THE TREES, AND STRAWED THEM IN THE WAY. AND THE MULTITUDES THAT WENT BEFORE, AND THAT FOLLOWED, CRIED, SAYING, HOSANNA TO THE SON OF DAVID: BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST."—MATT. XXI. 1-9.

"AND WHEN HE WAS COME NIGH, EVEN NOW AT THE DESCENT OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, THE WHOLE MULTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLES BEGAN TO REJOICE, AND PRAISE GOD WITH A LOUD VOICE FOR ALL THE MIGHTY WORKS THAT THEY HAD SEEN, SAYING, BLESSED BE THE KING THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD: PEACE IN HEAVEN, AND GLORY IN THE HIGHEST. AND SOME OF THE PHARISEES FROM AMONG THE MULTITUDE SAID UNTO HIM, MASTER, REBUKE THY DISCIPLES. AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THEM, I TELL YOU, THAT IF THESE SHOULD HOLD THEIR PEACE, THE STONES WOULD IMMEDIATELY CRY OUT."—LUKE XIX. 37-41.

"REJOICE GREATLY, O DAUGHTER OF ZION; SHOUT, O DAUGHTER OF JERUSALEM: BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH UNTO THEE: HE IS JUST, AND HAVING SALVATION; LOWLY, AND RIDING UPON AN ASS, AND UPON A COLT THE FOAL OF AN ASS."—ZECH. IX. 9.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY.

It is the loveliest season in the Palestine year, when, the rain "over and gone," the Mount of Olives is carpeted with green, and fresh foliage is clothing its varied groves. Multitudes, as we found in the preceding chapter, were congregated within Jerusalem and its suburbs, from every corner of the Hebrew territory, to keep the great national feast. Many of these, we further noted, attracted by the fame of the Prophet of Galilee, and more especially by His crowning miracle in the resurrection of Lazarus, poured in an enthusiastic stream to Bethany; some, after sunset, on the Jewish Sabbath,—others early on the following morning. Then, as now, two main roads conducted from the city to this sequestered mountain-hamlet. The one, the shorter of the two, leads straight up the hill, crossing the hollow between its two principal summits. This is the way which we have already found, in a former 'Memory of Olivet,' was selected by David in his flight; the one which, naturally, all foot-travellers would follow. The other, longer and more winding, but adapting itself to a similar depression on the southern slope of the Mount, was (and still is, in a more limited sense) the great public way, traversed by horsemen and caravans from Jericho and the Jordan. It continues a wild mountain track

at this day. But though it must have been always steep, it has traces here and there, by the cuttings in the limestone rock, of a road formerly more befitting the great eastern approach (and the only truly grand and impressive approach) to "the city of the great King." The Evangelical narratives leave us little room to doubt, that it was along this magnificent highway the Redeemer was to make His public and triumphal entry.

The disciples have returned from their errand to the villager of Bethphage, to the spot where the procession had paused,—the crowd increasing every moment by fresh levies from Jerusalem on the one side, and from Perea and Galilee on the other. The commingled streams have met, and loud "as the noise of many waters" the air is vocal with festive song. The central object of attraction and homage in this enthusiastic crowd, is a lowly Pilgrim of Galilee; undistinguished by any outward badge of dignity. The mighty Victor over Hades, who had encountered and vanquished Death on his pale horse, was outwardly, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, an uncrowned hero;—no purple dress —no warrior's sword—no conquering chariot, as we then remarked, had He. And, so far as He Himself was concerned, He sought none. Easily might He have converted that hour of popular acclamation into an hour of triumph: easily could He have worked on the passions of those thousands now around Him. "Master, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?" was the muffled thought of many an impatient heart: a spark was all that was needed to kindle the conflagration, and the appropriate moment might seem to have arrived. Not a few in that crowd, as they stood, at the

outset of the march, on the ridge overlooking the scene of wild desolation stretching down to the Jordan valley, must have remembered the trumpet-tones of one, who, by the severe sanctity of his life, had won their deepest reverence. Had not the Baptist said of this very Prophet of Nazareth, "He must increase, but I must decrease"? Might not the hour now be come for the prophetic fulfilment of "the voice crying in the wilderness"?—might not the kingdom spoken of by the faithful Herald be indeed at hand? What a favouring juncture, at least, to strike the blow! By the concurrent suffrages of that vast concourse—on the breath of their hosannas—how easily might the acknowledged Messiah-King have marched direct to the Palace, wrested the Roman standards from the walls of Antonia, and ascending as the Shiloh the throne of his father David, have restored to the people their lost prerogatives as a nation! He was, however, no political aspirant—no ambitious adventurer. Had He willed it, they would, ere this, have "taken Him by force to make Him a king." But He declines the proffered crown—He will "save others"—not glorify or "save Himself."

It was needful, nevertheless, at this solemn crisis, for reasons to which we shall immediately advert, to enter the metropolis, accompanied with some unmistakable badges of royalty. Though oftener He had not where to lay His head,—though in a few days, stripped of robe and mantle, He was to hang naked on the cross, it behoved Him now to make a public proclamation and manifesto of His theocratic rights. The homage therefore which would, in other circumstances and on other occasions, have been rejected, is now accepted. Sud-

denly, and without premeditation, OLIVET is converted into a highway for a conqueror's triumph. An ovation is improvised befitting the occasion, and the "children of Zion are joyful in their KING."

The procession moves on. The ass's colt, on which He rode, was, in one sense, as we have seen, a symbol of His lowliness—meekness—humiliation,—and yet, in another, it gave a traditional significance to the doings of the hour. For it was the animal that had been bestrode, on more than one occasion of historic interest, by kings and judges, lawgivers and prophets. In present circumstances, its employment was still further suggestive. The words of one of their old seers could scarcely fail to seize the popular mind, and stimulate the ardour of the moment—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass," (Zech. ix. 9.) All strove to respond to this call from a prophetic past. Some of the more devoted threw their garments (*ábayas*) as saddle-cloths on the back of the colt; others spread them, as a tribute of loyalty and homage, along the rough road; others, from the groves and gardens of palm which have since perished, cut down branches of these, along with other green boughs, similar to what we found, in a previous chapter, was the wont at the Feast of Tabernacles. Along this leafy carpet, composed of these symbols of rejoicing, rides Zion's King: for once, at least, not "despised nor rejected." Shouts of victory and welcome wake every echo of the Mount, which is so soon, alas! to listen to other and sadder exclamations from the lips of that fickle populace, ere

the palm branches have yet withered which they had just strewn on His path.*

No traveller who has visited the actual scene, can fail to be struck with the remarkable accordance of the locality and its outer framework, with the description in the Evangelical narratives. Shortly after leaving 'the town of Mary and Martha,' a turn in the road would bring the procession to the Valley of Bethany,—at present, as has been previously noted, a wild, picturesque, and (notwithstanding its proximity to the city) a sequestered ravine; to avoid the deep depression of which, the path turns abruptly now, as it must have done then, to the right, skirting the southern slope of Olivet. At this point, before descending to the sharp and steep angle, the crowd would suddenly catch the first glimpse of Jerusalem. It would, however, be but a glimpse, as Zion alone is here visible. The intervening flank of Olivet would screen the Temple, with all the northern portions of the city, from view, and reveal no more than "the citadel" and what was once the Palace of David. But that glimpse is suggestive. "Zion!" "Zion's King!" "David's Son!" It is the "Daughter of Zion" (the city of David) that is first to "rejoice," and she therefore must intone the first strophe of the song. The very song, too, is selected from David's minstrelsy—"for," we read,

* We are led to infer, by incidental allusions in the narrative, that the bulk of this living stream was composed, not so much of Jerusalem citizens, as of Passover Pilgrims from other parts of the country, and specially from Galilee;—for we find when the day terminated, by the triumphant Saviour entering the courts of the Temple, and when the manifestation of such unwonted enthusiasm prompted on many lips the eager query, "Who is this?" (Matt. xxi. 10,) the reply of the palm-bearers who surrounded the object of royal acclamation, as if they were proud of the name, was—"This is *the Prophet of Galilee*." See Meyer on St John vii. 52.

(mark the allusions,) "when Jesus was come nigh even now *at the descent* of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and to praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, Blessed be the kingdom of *our father David*," (Mark xi. 10.) "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. . . . Hosanna to *the Son of David*. Hosanna in the highest."* Nor was it merely as a Prophet,—a worthy successor of the now martyred Baptist,—that He is hailed with these loud acclaims. For it is deserving of note, that this was the scripture which every Jew had been taught specially to connect with the advent of Messiah. It was the verse—the note—dearest to them in the great HALLEL sung at their Paschal feasts. It was the nation's prayer for its coming King!

Full, doubtless, many a bosom is, with high-wrought expectation. As the crowd swells and the fervour every moment increases, may not the sanguine hope to which we have alluded, grow in intensity also, that the hour of emancipation has come? May they not hear in these thunder-shouts the doom of the Roman? Already may they not see in imagination the hated eagles driven from their perch in the most Holy Place—the invader and his armies dispersed and broken—"the Lord" whom they had long "sought" and longed for, suddenly "coming to His Temple," as the avenger and emancipator of the nation, the redresser of her cruel wrongs? (Mal. iii. 1.)

But let us follow still onward the jubilant multitude. Owing to the rapid descent in the road just referred to, the

* See Dean Stanley's well-known description in "*Sinai and Palestine.*"

view of the city is, for the time, lost. The prospect would be limited by the Valley of Bethany on the one hand, and by the top of the mount, crowned by David's old altar, on the other,—which possibly also may have lent its silent voice in intensifying the ascription of the hour. Many lips, in these moments of transient enthusiasm, may have caught up, in spirit at least, the song of a more faithful worshipper, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant DAVID," (Luke i. 68, 69.) And now, we may imagine, they have begun the ascent of the opposite side of the valley. New palm branches are cut from the groves abounding in this most sheltered hollow on the Mount, and increasing shouts are ascending,—hymns from David's Psalter, mingling with more recent angelic strains, (Luke xix. 33.) The jealous Pharisees, the alone exceptions to the universal joy, ask of Christ to rebuke these mistimed acclamations. His reply is, that no voice dare be silenced; that the very stones of Olivet would resent the attempted suppression,—"I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out!" At last they have reached the height,—the height which, at a future Paschal feast, was sprinkled with the tents of the Roman army. Even now, there is no such vision of any earthly city, if we may except perhaps the one famous view of Damascus from 'The Dome of Victory,' (*Kubbet-en-nasr.*) If so impressive to travellers at this day, when they can only look across to the widowed Queen as she sits in the ashes of her desolation, what must it have been in the day of her regal splendour, enthroned on her four hills, of Acra, Moriah, Bezetha, and

Zion, "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God"! (Isa. lxii. 3.) Not now, as in the earlier part of the procession, (the fragmental glimpse of Zion and the city of David,) but the whole metropolis—fortresses, walls, Temple, towers—rose in transcendent and surpassing loveliness, set in the blue azure Heaven; —so "near" in that clear atmosphere, that, to the unpractised eye, the existence of the intervening Kedron gorge can scarce be credited. That "Mountain of holiness" seems, from this height, like its sterner elder sister, "a mount that might be touched:"—who that has ever seen the spot, can fail, in a moment, to recognise it; and identify it with the words, "And when He was come NEAR, He BEHELD THE CITY."

Touching and impressive procession! How different from the triumph of earthly conquerors! How different from those proud ovations up the steeps of the Roman capitol, or to the Temple of Victory on the Athenian Acropolis, when the wail of the captive and the bereaved, blended with the notes of Fame's brazen trumpets, and the wheels of the war-chariots were soiled with the blood and dust of battle! Every tongue here, has to tell only of mercy, compassion, and tenderest sympathy. The restored blind, with eyes unsealed, are there to lead the way. The restored dumb, with tongues unloosed, are there, to shout the cry of welcome. The restored cripple is there, to strip the palm-tree for his mute tribute of gratitude. The healed leper is there, to spread his now untainted garment on the road. The 'clothed' demoniac is there, to proclaim, "The Lord hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad." The widow and the orphan are there to tell, "He hath taken off our sackcloth, and girded us with gladness."

The very children are there, with their little palm-branches, to take up the refrain, "Hosanna to the Son of David," (Matt. xxi. 15.) Ay, the restored dead are there,—their once silenced tongues now set in glad music to the glory of their great Restorer;—"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence: but we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore," (Ps. cxv. 17, 18.)

Let us now proceed, in a few sentences, to state the main object of this remarkable incident in the closing chapters of our Lord's earthly history, and, in its outer accompaniments, the most imposing and impressive of all the "Memories" of the Mount.

We must recur for a moment to the point on which we have already incidentally touched, viz., its *publicity*—and this too a *purposed* publicity. It was a thing of Christ's own deliberate choosing and arrangement. In this respect, we noted in the former chapter, how unlike all the other deeds of our Lord. It was prophesied regarding Him, "He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall he lift up his voice in the streets:" and all the previous incidents of His life serve only to illustrate and confirm this prophetical description. At other times, He seems to desire and to court, nay, He enjoins, the utmost privacy. He goes forth all alone to the Temptation in the wilderness:—no human eye witnesses that stupendous struggle. On another occasion, He charges "to tell no man." He retires to the northern shore of Gennesaret, when the proposal, we have already referred to, is whispered, to make Him a King. He meets again and again His disciples *alone*. The glories of Tabor were witnessed by no multi-

tude. The treading of the sea was at midnight, and when His apostles were by themselves. It was after He had "put all out of the house," and amid the hush of impressive silence, He raised the daughter of Jairus. The last rite of His dying love was instituted in the strict privacy of the "upper chamber." He meets the disciples at early morn by the shores of Tiberias! Why, then, this startling exception? Why on the present occasion "cry and lift up His voice"? Why, for once, contradict His own assertion, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation"?

It does not seem enough to say, that this entrance into Jerusalem was intended, as we have just been regarding it, as a manifestation of His Kingly glory—a foreshadowing of the future, when He would be hailed as King of Zion and Prince of peace, (though this doubtless was one end contemplated.) Nor, as others have held, that it was specially designed to brace and nerve His disciples for the scenes of humiliation and suffering which were at hand. Had this been all, He might, in conformity with previous instances, have given them in private and apart from the world, some such equivalent regal manifestation. A little while before, He had been in the region of Cesarea-Philippi, where first He began to discourse of His death and passion. He might there, among the sublime solitudes of Hermon, have summoned legions of angels to do Him homage; and instead of sending to borrow, from a Judean villager, two lowly animals, every lordly tenant that roamed these northern forests, "from Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens and the mountains of the leopards," might have graced His triumph, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, as consecrated ointment, flowed at

His feet. There, He might have appeared, as He did at a future time to John, with "His eyes as a flame of fire; His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters." What then, we again ask, seems to have been the chief reason, on the present occasion, of this unwonted publicity? We answer, It was in order to draw public attention to the great crowning act of His Incarnation—(and which in two days was to be consummated)—*His death for the life of the world.* It was of the last importance, that the eyes of the whole Jewish nation (the representative of the world's nations) should be directed towards a *crucified* Saviour. While, as we have seen, in other incidents of His earthly existence, He courted retirement,—it was necessary to surround His *death* with every possible notoriety. Hence Augustine truly says, in his comment on this episode in a life of unobtrusive humility and self-abnegation, "It is not so much the triumph of a king, as the procession of a victim to the sacrifice." It was remarkable, (the coincidence could not be by HIM undesigned,) that this jubilant day was the 10th of *Nisan*—a day pre-eminently sacred to the whole Jewish people, and specially to the congregated worshippers—as that upon which the Paschal Lamb was set apart. He, the great Antitype, in presence of the assembled nation, and by a voluntary act, sets Himself apart, on this same day, for His own oblation. As a King, claiming alone spiritual sovereignty—He enters the Temple as His royal Palace. But He enters it, too—Priest and Victim combined —as the place of sacrifice; "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"—"Christ OUR PASSOVER sacrificed for us." It would have been indeed sufficient, (so far as the virtue

and efficaciousness of His atonement was concerned, as the surety-Saviour,) had He died in *solitude*. There would have been even something perhaps grand and impressive, and also more in keeping with His antecedents, if, instead of the rude shouts of Calvary, and the ignominy of open crucifixion, He had closed His eyes in their death-sleep, like Moses, all alone, on the heights of another Pisgah;—or, as with a still earlier type, been offered up, like Isaac, on the summit of some kindred lonely mount. But it was needful for the Church, in all future ages, that His *death* be attested, *without a shadow of doubt*. And never could season be better selected, to attract universal attention, than when Jews and proselytes were assembled from all the neighbouring countries in the Hebrew capital. This very mountain, which witnessed the procession, was itself studded over, in its green hollows, with the black and white tents of the assembled pilgrims, who, owing to the scanty room in the city, were driven to erect their temporary booths in the public Park. Doubtless, on that day, this Triumphal entrance formed the talk of Jerusalem. It would be the topic on every tongue; and, weeks after these startling events, when the Jews now assembled at the Paschal feast returned to their several distant homes, they would, more strikingly still, connect the two prophecies of Zechariah—"Behold thy King cometh;" and the "sword awaking" from its scabbard,—the "wounds in the hands,"—"wounded in the house of his friends," (Zech. xiii. 6, 7.)

Behold, then, in the Triumphal entry, the public presentation of the priceless Sacrifice. It was, if we might be allowed the expression, the bleating of the true Paschal Lamb, as,

adorned with fillets, He was led to the slaughter. It was the sounding of silver trumpets summoning to the great festival; —the Sabbath-bell of the world's long week of expectation, tolling on the heights of Olivet, to gather the multitudes around the Altar of offering. That bell rang the chimes of another Evangelical Prophet, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, BEHOLD YOUR GOD!" (Isa. xl. 9.)

Although, however, we have now indicated what formed the principal object of Messiah's public entrance, there was doubtless what was prophetic in it also. It was a foreshadowing of future glory;—that Christ (soon to suffer) would one day come to reign; having His dominion, according to the words embraced in Zechariah's prediction, "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;"—when the Alleluia of the children of Abraham would mingle with the Hosanna of the Gentile, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

That day, at Jerusalem, was doubtless a joyful one to the disciples, when they saw their beloved Lord and Master so worthily honoured. But if they had been able, in any measure, to understand the mysterious intimations which had recently fallen from His lips, there must have been also sadder thoughts intermingled with the glad acclaims. These shouts of triumph must have been marred with dark forebodings, which were only too truthfully realised! Not so,

is it, regarding His second coming. No shadow of death darkens "that blessed hope,"—no traitor will lurk in that triumphal path—no sorrow cloud that hour of joy.

Reader, are you ready to glorify Christ? Are you ready to strew the palm-branch on His path, and to greet Him with the Hosanna? Remember if YOU will not glorify Him, He will get others to do so. "If these hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." 'Attempt not,' He says still, as He said of old, 'to rob me of my Hosannas. The rocks around—dumb nature—would enter her protest;—the stones would become vocal, and shout my praise.' I repeat, if *we* refuse to honour Christ, and to join the willing multitude who do Him homage, He will get others more loyal to take our place. His glory will not suffer: out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He will perfect praise: ay, from the mute creation, He will raise up a special seed: He will put a tongue and a song into the insensate stone.

"Tell ye the daughter of Zion," so ran the prophecy, "Behold, thy King cometh." This is a concluding but most solemn view of the Triumphal entrance. It was a last—a closing offer of the Redeemer to the "daughter of Zion." This slow procession wending across OLIVET, was a final, long-rejected overture of kindness—one other opportunity to hear His voice and turn at His reproof. Christ makes His entrance, Sabbath after Sabbath, to the courts of the earthly Zion, and in the case of some, as with Jerusalem of old, with the last message of His mercy;—a *closing* appeal—a *final* remonstrance—a *farewell* knock at the door of the heart, ere His offers of love pass for ever away. Let us meet Him

now,—meet Him joyfully as Christ the Saviour; that when the advent cry shall be heard—when the world shall be startled by the summons, "Behold, thy King cometh!" we may be able—each with the prepared palm-branch of victory, to line the royal path—and to say, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

X.

The Tears of Jesus on the Mount.

"AND WHEN HE WAS COME NEAR, HE BEHELD THE CITY, AND WEPT OVER IT, SAYING, IF THOU HADST KNOWN, EVEN THOU, AT LEAST IN THIS THY DAY, THE THINGS WHICH BELONG UNTO THY PEACE! BUT NOW THEY ARE HID FROM THINE EYES. FOR THE DAYS SHALL COME UPON THEE, THAT THINE ENEMIES SHALL CAST A TRENCH ABOUT THEE, AND COMPASS THEE ROUND, AND KEEP THEE IN ON EVERY SIDE, AND SHALL LAY THEE EVEN WITH THE GROUND, AND THY CHILDREN WITHIN THEE; AND THEY SHALL NOT LEAVE IN THEE ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER; BECAUSE THOU KNEWEST NOT THE TIME OF THY VISITATION."—LUKE XIX. 41–44.

THE TEARS OF JESUS ON THE MOUNT.

IN the previous chapter, we followed the rejoicing multitudes along "the olive-bordered way"—till they had attained the ridge of the Mount overlooking the valley of Jehoshaphat—which disclosed in all its glory and magnificence the towers and palaces of Zion. First the walls and fortresses, and then the Temple on its rock, set as a magnificent jewel in this casing, burst upon their view. These multitudes were occupied with their shouts of welcome; but other thoughts —other sounds were engrossing the central figure in that procession, when He beheld 'the elect metropolis of God.' There was a solemn pause. He had reined in, for a moment, the docile animal on which He rode. His eyes, "homes of silent prayer," dissolve in tears. "When He was come near, *He beheld the city*, and WEPT OVER IT."

Strange and startling emotion! It requires some vast—some peculiar cause—to make a great man weep. A child, or one of feeble mind, is easily melted into tears, when danger or trouble is impending. But a heroic spirit, superior to the ordinary frailties and weaknesses of humanity,—much more, in the present case, the Son of God and Lord of Life—He who had recently stormed and conquered Death itself in his own stronghold,—how vast—how stupendous must have been the cause which opened the sluices of *His* heart—the floodgates

of *such* grief! He had wept, indeed, only a few days before. But there is a remarkable contrast between the two occasions. The one was a crowd of sorrow. His tears at Bethany were in harmony with the scene: at a time of bereavement we look for tears. *There*, moreover, He wept not alone: they were, in part at least, tears evoked by the grief of the surrounding mourners; for as He saw Mary and Martha weeping—and the Jews also weeping which came with them—He could not forbid the tribute of a Godlike sympathy, and we read, "JESUS WEPT!"

Here, however, it was different. OLIVET, as we have seen, was, at the moment, a scene not of weeping and sorrow, but of universal gladness. Palm-branches were waving, and a mighty choir of voices from all parts of Palestine were waking, with strains of jubilee, the echoes of the Mount. ONE of that dense multitude refused to participate in the joy. When the others rejoiced, "*Jesus* WEPT."

Why this solitary cloud amid the bright sunshine? Why this one strange inharmonious note in that burst of melody? When we see joyous faces and joyous smiles, and hear kindly words and greetings, the heaviest heart can scarce refuse to take off its sackcloth and share in the general gladness. Surely, then, it must have been no ordinary reason, when every face spake of brightness, and every buoyant step of triumph—that the Object of the loyal acclaim was Himself the only exception,—that He maintained, not only a seemingly passive indifference to all that was transacting around Him—but burst into a strange agony of tears. Yes—an *agony* of tears; for it is worthy of note also, that the word in the original Greek used to describe the tears of Jesus at

the grave of *Lazarus,* is an altogether different one from that employed, on this occasion, of His weeping over Jerusalem. In the one case, the word for ordinary grief is selected. He wept, as one bereft friend weeps in the chamber of death over the memories of a cherished friendship. But the sorrow over Jerusalem was of an intenser kind. Tears, intensely bitter, welled up from the lowest depths of His heart;—tears accompanied with a wail of passionate exclamation,—the sob of irrepressible anguish which one may have heard, not over the holy memory of buried love, but over other and darker woes too deep for utterance—transcending tears! * What paroxysm of grief, then, can this be? Are these tears forced from His eyes at the dread anticipation of His own sufferings? As He now comes in sight of Gethsemane—the Kedron murmuring at His feet—and the place of crucifixion looming in the distance, does the thought of His own superhuman anguish unman His soul? Nay,—more unselfish far is the heart of that Divine Philanthropist. His tears are not for Himself, but for the doomed thousands in the devoted city hard by. He is the hero of the hour. A burst of acclaim, such as never before greeted Him, rises from the surging multitudes, "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." Can these unwonted sounds of gladness fail to revive His drooping spirit? Can He who was more sadly familiar with obloquy, and taunt, and scorn, remain unmoved and ungladdened amid these pæans of Victory? Yes! what was outward pomp and glory —what the capricious breath of popular applause—the fitful

* See Stier, *in loc.*

cry of the fickle multitude—what the glittering crown they were prepared to place on His brow, in comparison with souls over whom hung the doom of so terrible a retribution? He has no ears for the hollow shout of loyalty—no eyes for the dense throng and their waving branches of evanescent triumph;—"He beheld the CITY, and wept over IT!"

But let us advert, more particularly, to one or two of the causes of the tears of Jesus on the heights of the Mount.

The first of these, we may mention, was *the abuse of past privileges.*

The record of a thousand years of privilege and blessing, enjoyed by the Jewish nation, was now unfolded to His omniscient eye. God had made Zion His holy habitation—"Beautiful for situation—the joy of the whole earth . . the city of the great King!" There, prophets had unsealed their rolls and uttered their warnings. There, Psalmists had sung their hymns of praise. There, Priests had waved their censers, and daily shed the typical blood which pointed to the Great coming Sacrifice. There, Jehovah Himself had dwelt, in visible glory, in the Shekinah of the mercy-seat. Jerusalem had been the *Mahanaim*—or rather, the *Bethel* of a later age, where rested the base of the mystic ladder between earth and heaven, traversed by angels, and conducting into the true Holiest of all. Well might God say, "What more could I have done for my vineyard?" He had planted the wild Vine from Egypt with His right hand;—He had nurtured and fenced it:—often and again had He prevented the boar out of the wood from wasting it, and the wild beast of the field from devouring it. Amid rebellion, forgetfulness,

and backsliding, He had dealt with Israel as a loving and forgiving father deals with a wayward son—saying, with the tender anguish of a parent's soul, "How can I give thee up?" And yet Prophets had warned, and Psalmists had sung, and sacrificial blood had been shed in vain. They were centuries filled with mournful recollections of grace resisted, privileges abused, opportunities slighted.

JESUS, at that moment, scanned these ages of foul ingratitude—hollow formalism—hypocritical insincerity—Pharasaic pride—national apostasy: His prophets slain—His servants beaten—His vineyard trodden under foot, or become a wasted wilderness. That thousand years had been loading the cloud of vengeance: and now, as He saw it about to burst, the tears streamed from His eyes. If the loss even of *one* soul is represented as a catastrophe, in comparison with which the gain of a world sinks into insignificance, what must have been at this juncture, to the eye of Christ, the guilt and doom of a *whole city*, a whole nation? We know some of the holiest and bravest hearts among Israel, wept hot tears of lamentation over the apostasy of their countrymen. Jeremiah wished that his "head were waters" and his eyes were "a fountain of tears," that he might "weep day and night." "My soul," said he, "shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears." Paul had "great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart" for his brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh. What, then, must have been the bitterness of those tears which took in at a glance, not years, but ages and centuries? Oh need we wonder, that, at that eventful moment, when Incarnate Love beheld the outstretched wings

of a destroying angel hovering over the old metropolis of patriarchs and prophets, — need we wonder that at the thought—the sight—He could not control His Divine-human emotion; and that tears bedewed the very palm-branches of triumph that were lying unheeded at His feet!

But these tears of Jesus embraced all time. The earthly Jerusalem which then met His eye, was a type—a miniature picture—of mankind at large; ay, and of many among ourselves who cannot, if they would, refuse to own the truth of the parallel! Has He not loaded each one of us with benefits—filled our cup with unmerited blessings—proclaimed in our ears the great salvation,—sent messenger after messenger of rebuke and entreaty,—remonstrance and warning? Have His counsels been despised? Have the soul's temple-courts been converted into desecrated shrines,—places of unholy traffic, unrighteous barter,—the haunts of hollow hypocrisy and base formalism, selfishness and mammon, malice and envy, pride and passion? As He comes, day by day, to make inquisition—as He sees hundreds living on, in guilty unconsciousness of their sin and danger, despising His warnings, treating His ambassadors with scorn, and His words as idle tales;—or, perhaps, as He sees, what we cannot, the final doom impending—the messenger of death at the door, and a long life of guilt and sin beyond the reach of penitence—may we not realise, in symbol, this exalted Son of God looking down from the enthroned heights of the Heavenly OLIVET; and as He beholds the metropolis of the human heart despoiled of its glories—a pillaged city, with ramparts broken and temples defiled,—by a bold figure of speech as applied to a glorified Being in a tearless world,

may it not be said, "And when He came near, He beheld the city, and wept over it"?

Another cause of the tears of Jesus over Jerusalem was, *her rejection of present mercies and warnings.*

When other appliances and remonstrances had failed, God had sent His best gift, saying, "Surely they will reverence my Son." For three years, that Divine Messenger had been knocking at the gates of the impenitent city. He came to His vineyard "seeking fruit." He dug about the vine; He pruned it and dressed it. How unwearied the means employed to arrest the ears of the impenitent! How tender, loving, considerate His dealings with all! He invited the sin-stricken to crouch at His feet. Disease touched the hem of His garment, and was healed. Sorrow had the tears of bereavement dried. He had walked in the midst of their streets; and gathering the weak and weary, the helpless and wretched and desponding around Him, He had uttered the gladdening invitation, irrespective of age or character, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Himself homeless and houseless—subject to every privation, He had traversed the length and breadth of the land, scattering blessings in His path, and pleading for admittance to obdurate hearts. Despite of all indifference, undeterred by contumely, He had pursued His ministry of kindness. No frown in His countenance spurned the suppliant from His presence. There was no wearying of His patience—no repressing His consuming zeal. The waves of mercy, beaten back by these rocky hearts, only returned afresh in a refluent tide of untiring, unresting love. "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He says, in an apostrophe of touching pathos, "how often would I have gathered thee!" He stood by her gates, as He is represented standing in the imagery of the Canticles, saying, "Open unto me, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is wet with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." But it had been all to no effect. "For my love," (in return for my love,) "they are my adversaries," (Ps. cix. 4.) The hour of grace and reprieve is fast passing: the cup of long-deferred wrath is fast filling. Jesus reaches the brow of the hill, and sees, in dread perspective, the consummating act of guilt in His own crucifixion and death: (Oh, if they had looked into the depths of that loving, merciful, unselfish heart, they *could* not "have crucified the Lord of Glory.") As He stands on the ridge, the sheep-gate is before Him, leading into the Temple, through which, for hundreds of years, animals had been conducted for sacrifice. It was soon to open for the great Antitype, taken "by wicked hands," "as a Lamb to the slaughter." As it has been beautifully said, "The Sun of Righteousness lingers a moment on Mount Olivet, as if to respite the doom," ere He sets in darkness and blood behind these devoted towers. He seems to say, O city of David! is it *yet* too late? Mercy, that has long hovered like a guardian angel around thee, is now pluming her wings for farewell flight. But still she lingers, as if loath to leave. Still it is "*thy day*," (the day of merciful visitation.) Yes! THIS thy day. The day is nearing its close—the cold twilight shadows are falling—the sun is fast westering. Can it be, that thou wilt yet know in this waning day "the things that belong to thy peace"? Or, is the curtain to fall, and the knell of irrevocable judg-

ment to be tolled, "*but now they are hid from thine eyes!*"

Is there any such rejection of *present* mercies and monitory voices among ourselves? I speak not of the past, with its array of privileges and providential warnings and blessings. That may be a solemn retrospect too; but I speak of present unbelief—present hardness and impenitence of heart. The most solemn period of responsibility to the Jewish people, was when Jesus was in their midst. It was "*that generation*"—the generation who had rejected HIM—who were most guiltily culpable. He could well arraign the whole nation, in the words addressed on another occasion to Philip—'It is not servants, delegates, prophets to whom ye have refused to listen; but "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME?"' (John xiv. 9.) How many, in our own day, may well be sisted at the bar, and have preferred against them a similar indictment! Jesus speaking, sometimes by mercies, these mercies unacknowledged; sometimes by judgment and solemn warning, these warnings rejected. By blessings bestowed and blessings removed—by gourds given and gourds withered;—and yet, this pleading, importuning Saviour, has in their case, too, to utter the reproach of unrequited love, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast *thou* not known me?" I have exhausted every arrow of my quiver:—I have spoken by the volleyed lightning, and the heaving earthquake, and "the still small voice"—"but ye would none of my counsel, ye despised all my reproof!" 'Sinner,' He seems to say, 'if thou art destroyed, it is thyself who art alone responsible. "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life."'

A third cause of the tears which Jesus wept on the ridge of OLIVET, was, *the thought of the future temporal retribution that would fall on the Jewish nation.*

The details of this we shall reserve for a future chapter. Meanwhile, be it enough to observe, that, as He looked down from these heights on tower and Temple beneath, His omniscient glance discerned, too truly, the eagles of Rome hastening to the scene of ruin; His ear listened to the tread of the hosts mustering for battle; He saw the flames bursting from the gates of the Temple, the Holy and beautiful House laid level with the ground—a heap of smouldering ashes! More than this, He beheld the Jewish nation scattered and peeled. After the Roman ploughshare was driven up the steeps of Zion, and her streets given over to the alien and the stranger, He saw thousands on thousands of the unhappy race scattered in every land like wrecks on a desert shore. Yes! we may imagine the eye of the Great Redeemer, at that moment, carried down succeeding ages, far beyond Olivet and the Kedron: beholding the Jew—the inhabitant of all lands, the chartered citizen of none;—seated by the banks of every stream, hanging his broken harp on the willows; traversing all climes with weary feet and saddened countenance—'a nation without a home, often without a grave.' Nothing, indeed, in that moment of elation and triumph, seemed to forecast so terrible a destiny. The Holy city was then in the zenith of her glory. Herod, in the pride of his magnificence, had lavished Roman wealth and the proceeds of oppressive Jewish taxation, on the embellishment of his capital. Tower upon tower girdled with strength his own royal

Palace. The great fort or arsenal of Antonia rose by the side of the Temple, as if the pledge and guardian of inviolable safety. Moreover, who could have predicted, from the loyal shouts of welcome, that the hailed Messiah of to-day was to be the betrayed of to-morrow, and that these green palm-branches were so soon to lie withered at the foot of an ignominious cross? But He penetrated through the hollow, painted pageantry of the hour. He saw underneath the verdant turf of Olivet, a smothered volcano of fiery passions. Floating up the vista of ages, He listened to a wail of anguish—the plaint of retributive vengeance—from children's children, immured in dungeons, or hunted in forests, or tortured in flames. Terrible to that Heart of doating love must have been the anticipation! We know the agony of the mother who sees the child of her idol affections cut down in a moment by plague or pestilence, or, it may be, plucked too late from the waves, and laid a withered, faded flower at her feet. Sadder still, that of the parent who gazes on worse than death—the child, too fondly loved, that has brought dishonour and disgrace on a virtuous name, and dragged gray hairs prematurely to the grave. What parent ever loved his child as Jesus did that nation? From their infancy in Egypt, on to this the time of their degenerate manhood, did He not bear them, "as a man beareth his own son that serveth him"? If it be mournful to mark the desolating track of invading armies; or to witness the bleeding wounds—the death-throes of freedom, —liberty expiring under tyrant hands,—dynasties with a proud record of historic deeds falling "unwept without a crime;"—what must have been the deep emotion of Jesus

for a country that had sealed its own doom—forged its own fetter—loaded its own cloud of wrath? His exclamation was not, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, and ye *could* not,—it was some iron hand of despotism that crushed thee: another Pharaoh or Sennacherib that frustrated my designs, and dragged thee an unwilling captive to foreign climes and chains;'—but '"ye *would* not." Often did I seek to avert this now inevitable hour. Your past defiant ingratitude and resistance of my pleadings, again and again demanded prompt and instantaneous retribution. The bolts of vengeance were impatient for their volleyed mission; but I stayed them, to see if, peradventure, ye would yet repent, and return and live. But it is all in vain. You have exhausted Mercy's time of respite. With reluctant step she now descends the golden steps of her throne, and Justice is preparing to take her place. The arm "strong to save," and willing to be so, must now show itself "strong to smite."'

A remark may be here interposed. In all this dealing of Jesus, let us acknowledge at least, if we cannot fully comprehend, the compatibility of God's sovereign purpose with man's free agency. We believe both. If asked to reconcile them, it is impossible. Christ foresaw, with all the certainty and foreknowledge of a divine decree, that Jerusalem would despise the day of her visitation, and remain obdurate and impenitent; and yet the guilt and responsibility of rejected mercy lay with herself. We never can dare speak of that touching scene in this passage as an occasion of mimic grief,—that Christ wept for what He knew was the stern result of an absolute decree, which no tears of His, or no penitence

of theirs, could alter or prevent. Theological systems, in their dogmatism, may well learn a lesson of humility,—to submit to revealed truths and believe them, though they may often be difficult to weld together. Christ doubtless said what He meant, and meant what He said, when on that memorable day He gazed down from the Mount of Olives on a doomed and guilty city, and, through tears of no sembled sorrow, exclaimed, "If thou, even thou, hadst known in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace." "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me!"

Another cause of these tears of Jesus was, *the thought of the final and eternal retribution that would be visited on all the adversaries of God.*

Temporal retribution on one kingdom and people, could hardly fail to suggest a more saddening train of reflection still. The Jew and his city were here also—as already observed, and as we find in other sayings and parables of Christ—the type and representatives of the world and of mankind. Our blessed Lord saw a cloud as of a man's hand rising over the earthly Jerusalem; but He saw darker and denser clouds hovering over the horizon of a limitless future. He saw the gates of the earthly city burst open on the assault of the victorious legions of Titus, its walls succumbing before the torch and the catapult; but He saw the gates of a more terrible destruction unfolding—fiercer flames bursting forth on the contemners of His mercy. He saw the earthly Temple, with its Holy of Holies—the consecrated audience-chamber of His own earthly Palace—sacked and pillaged; but what was that to the destruc-

tion of a Temple more hallowed still—the Temple of the human soul: that Temple wrecked for eternity—suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? All earthly, finite comparisons, are vain to shadow forth a grief infinite like this. We have heard of a great sculptor weeping like a child, as he looked on the fragments of his breathing marble—the toil of a lifetime—which the blow of a rude hand had scattered on the ground; we have read of the Alexandrian sages gazing in tears on the smouldering ashes of their colossal Library; the treasures of ages, in a few hapless hours, lost to the world. Here we have, with reverence be it spoken, the Divine Artist mourning over the ruin and destruction of that which was fashioned after the image of God—archives given over to the flames, wherein are cloistered volumes, whose pages burn and glow with immortality. Yes, the Redeemer, that hour on Olivet, had suggested to Him the fate of millions on millions unborn who, in every century and clime, would despise alike warning and mercy. His eye, in that lightning glance, may have rested on *our* age—(who knows but on some guilty sinner among ourselves)—whose persistent rejection of His pleadings may have given a new intensity to the words: "If *thou*, even *thou*, hadst known, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!"

There is often the most thrilling eloquence in broken, half-finished sentences. The greatest orator of antiquity, in addressing his Athenian auditors, was often so thralled and spellbound by emotions he had himself roused, that utterance failed him. He communicated the intensity of his own feelings to others, by constrained, impressive

silence. In this respect, there is no more touching portion of Scripture, than the apostrophe of this passage—the stifled utterance from the lips of Incarnate Truth. Observe, the sentence is incomplete. It is abruptly broken in the middle. There is an *ellipsis*,—words which He leaves those who heard Him to supply,—as if His tears and profound emotion prevented supplying them Himself. He got the length of saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace. . . . ." Here He stops. We can almost picture to ourselves the visions which, during that momentary pause, rose before the eye of the weeping Saviour! Perhaps that is another reason of the *ellipsis:* He hurries through His sentence, as if to suppress fond hopes that were to know no fruition. If it be lawful to paraphrase the words,—to fill up that significant blank which He has left to our imagination to complete,—it might be thus: 'If thou,' He seems to say — 'if thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace, then what a bright future would have been thine!—if thou hadst, in the day of thy visitation, hearkened to Me and to My prophets, how glorious the things which that future would have spoken of thee, O city of God! I could think of thee, now, as I gaze down upon thy walls, as the metropolis of earth; an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations; the Pharos of the world; the Citadel of truth; the Ark of mercy — whence the dove would issue forth among the nations carrying the olive-branch of peace. But—vain is the picture. My words falter in the description of these visions of forfeited bliss,—for now they are hid from thine eyes!'

Were there no other visions of vanished hopes and ruined glory, which rose at that moment, before the eye of Omniscience? From OLIVET He overlooked the world. And do not the words come with an awful personality;—a solemn individual application, "THOU, even, THOU?" Yes, think of Him at this moment, stooping from His throne,—yearning with tenderness and pity over those who have no pity on themselves. It is with Heaven now, as with OLIVET of old,—the palm-branches and Hosannahs with which He is familiar in the midst of "the multitude which no man can number," do not exclude from His heart, thoughts for the ruined and lost—deep and tender concern for those who are still despising His counsel and rejecting His grace. Do we not hear Him as if thus addressing some such scorner of mercy?—'If thou—even thou—hadst known in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace. Guilty one! if thou hadst listened to sacred parental counsels—if thou hadst carried into the world the principles instilled in thy Christian home—if thou hadst been faithful to thy Bible and thy bended knees—if thou hadst evaded that haunt of temptation, scorned the impious bribe which tempted thee to dishonour, or plunged thee into sin,—if thou hadst listened to the voices of Providence, or to the faithful teachings of the sanctuary, when the messenger of Heaven reasoned to thee of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come—*then* how blissful thy present, how safe, how peaceful, how joyous thy future! But thou hast been a traitor to thy holy trust. Thou hast resisted grace—abused privilege—smothered conviction—despised warning. Thy heart is settling down to the fatal hardness of a confirmed impenitence; and if death

overtake thee as thou art, what else can I say regarding the things which belong to thy peace but this,—"Now they are hid from thine eyes?"'

Let none deceive themselves. It is a possible thing to do outward homage to the Saviour,—to be Christian in profession—to attend His sanctuary—to meet Him on the Mount of ordinances and to join in the Hallel and Hosanna,—and yet the heart, whose loyalty alone He prizes, may be estranged. There may be but the name to live, while the true vital energies of the soul have succumbed to spiritual death. He therefore tells us of a crowd, like that on Olivet, who are in future to confront Him on His throne, and who are to plead that once they sang His praise and waved their palm-branches and owned Him as King:—"Many will say to me at that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," (Matt. vii. 22, 23.)

"If thou—even *thou* hadst known—in *this thy day.*" What day? Each one of us has "A DAY"—"*a day of visitation.*" "This thy day" is the present. It is this hour that is passing over our head: not, "a more convenient season,"—not "To-morrow." It is not, Let me balance these accounts first—Let me close my business first—Let me educate my family first—Let me finish this engrossing work in hand first—but, "*To-day,* if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." And observe, it is but "*a day.*" It is not '*these thy days*'—but "*this thy day.*" The Spirit of God, willing to plead with you to-day, may be withdrawn

to-morrow. The arrow that may pierce to-day may be powerless to-morrow. "*This* day":—it is this day of *time.* Time's day is brief—and it is but *one.* Let its swift hours pass, and the day is ended. There is no second chance—no 'Try again.' "He that is unjust" must be "unjust still," and "he that is filthy" must be "filthy still." And it is THY day,—weal or woe, for eternity is in *thy* hand. The day is thine own, and the guilt will be thine own, if thou suffer that day to close without accepting offered mercy. The journey to which thy God calls thee may be easily completed in "*the day.*" Woe upon thee, if thou loiter and linger till the Sun of Righteousness sets, and thou art left belated in the blackness of eternal darkness!

These are solemn considerations. But, ere we close, be it ours to remember that the Saviour's tears are tears of mercy and encouragement, as well as of warning and judgment. These tears shed on the earthly mountain, are a pledge, that seated on His Eternal Throne in Heaven, He *pities* the sinner. "He *came near to the city.*" Reader, in various ways at this moment He may be coming "near" to *you,*—by His word, by afflictions, by solemn providential dispensations. Yes! we ask you to accompany us once more in thought, up these slopes, and if the threatenings of the law fail to move you—if warning, and rebuke, and chastisement make their appeal in vain,—say, will the tears of Jesus—these drops of living fire not melt the icy heart? And, oh, His tears were the least He gave. He did not come to Olivet, weep over Jerusalem, and then leave the world to its fate; He shed, *not His tears only, but His blood!* We have seen how His lamentation closes:—the emphatic ellipsis, the solemn pause; and

then the irrevocable words, "But now they are hid from thine eyes." With reference to any one of us, He has not reached that part of the sentence yet. No; the fact that we are still spared, is a proof that the things which belong to our peace are *not* hidden from our eyes. He is lengthening out our day of mercy—the sunbeams of grace are still lingering. He is pausing, as He did on the ridge over against Jerusalem, and seems to say, 'If this day, in simple faith, you will receive Me; then, peace is yours—pardon is yours—Heaven is yours.' It is your *peace*—"the things which belong to your *peace*." Peace! money cannot purchase it. Intellect cannot reach it. Wisdom cannot bribe it. But He is willing to *give* it. It is yours and mine, this day, if we only reach forth our hands to take it as 'the gift of God.'*

Blessed be His name, the recording angel still stays his flight. The chimes of mercy still float from the Sabbath-bells of Heaven. "Now is the day of salvation." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Melted by these tears of OLIVET, be it ours to take up the palm-branch and the Hosanna,—throwing open the long-closed Temple-gates of our alien hearts to Zion's King, saying, "BLESSED IS HE THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!" In the quaint but beautiful and appropriate lines of Jeremy Taylor, let us thus paraphrase the welcome—

* "The tears wept over others as lost and past hope, why should they not melt thee, while as yet there is hope in thy case? If thou be effectually melted in thy very soul, and looking to Him whom thou hast pierced, dost truly mourn over Him, thou mayest assure thyself the prospect this weeping eye had of lost souls, did not include thee. His weeping over thee would argue thy case forlorn and hopeless. Thy mourning over Him will make it safe and happy."—Howe's "Redeemer's Tears."

" Lord, come away;
Why dost thou stay?
Thy road is ready, and thy paths made straight,
With longing expectation wait
The consecration of Thy beauteous feet,
Ride on triumphantly; behold, we lay
Our lusts and proud wills in the way.
Hosanna! welcome to our hearts. Lord, here
Thou hast a temple too, and full as dear
As that of Zion, and as full of sin:
Nothing but thieves and robbers dwell therein.
Enter, and chase them forth, and cleanse the floor;
Crucify them, that they may never more
Profane Thy holy place,
Where Thou hast chose to set Thy face.
And then if our stiff tongues shall be
Mute in the praises of Thy Deity,
The stones out of the Temple wall
Shall cry aloud, and call,
'Hosanna!' and Thy glorious footsteps greet!" *

* The same venerated divine thus writes on the passage we have been considering:—

"In this day of His riding to Jerusalem, He wet the palms with a dew sweeter than the moisture upon Mount Hermon or the drops of manna: for to allay the little warmth of a spring joy, He let down a shower of tears, weeping over undone Jerusalem in the day of His triumph, leaving it disputable whether He felt more joy or sorrow in the acts of love; for He triumphed to consider that the redemption of the world was so near, and wept bitterly that men would not be redeemed. His joy was great to consider that Himself was to suffer so great sadness for our good; and His sorrow was very great to consider that we would not entertain that good that He brought and laid before us by His Passion."—Jeremy Taylor's "Life and Death of the Holy Jesus."

XI.

The Blighted Fig-Tree.

"AND HE LEFT THEM, AND WENT OUT OF THE CITY INTO BETHANY; AND HE LODGED THERE. NOW IN THE MORNING, AS HE RETURNED INTO THE CITY, HE HUNGERED. AND WHEN HE SAW A FIG-TREE IN THE WAY, HE CAME TO IT, AND FOUND NOTHING THEREON, BUT LEAVES ONLY, AND SAID UNTO IT, LET NO FRUIT GROW ON THEE HENCEFORWARD FOR EVER. AND PRESENTLY THE FIG-TREE WITHERED AWAY."—MATT. XXI. 17–19.

"AND ON THE MORROW, WHEN THEY WERE COME FROM BETHANY, HE WAS HUNGRY: AND SEEING A FIG-TREE AFAR OFF HAVING LEAVES, HE CAME, IF HAPLY HE MIGHT FIND ANY THING THEREON: AND WHEN HE CAME TO IT, HE FOUND NOTHING BUT LEAVES; FOR THE TIME OF FIGS WAS NOT YET. AND JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO IT, NO MAN EAT FRUIT OF THEE HEREAFTER FOR EVER. AND HIS DISCIPLES HEARD IT. . . . AND IN THE MORNING, AS THEY PASSED BY, THEY SAW THE FIG-TREE DRIED UP FROM THE ROOTS. AND PETER, CALLING TO REMEMBRANCE, SAITH UNTO HIM, MASTER, BEHOLD, THE FIG-TREE WHICH THOU CURSEDST IS WITHERED AWAY."—MARK XI. 12–14, 20, 21.

THE BLIGHTED FIG-TREE.

FOLLOWING the chronological sequence of the Evangelical narrative, an OLIVET 'memory' of a different kind, claims our attention in this chapter.

The incident has the one remarkable peculiarity, that it stands alone in the ministry of Christ as a miracle of punishment. At other times, as we follow the footsteps of our blessed Lord, and are the spectators of His mighty works, He scatters mercy on His path. By miracle and parable, by word and deed, He countersigns and endorses His own declaration, "The Son of man came not to destroy, but to save." Here, however, though it be but on an inanimate object in outer nature, we are arrested with a strange, solitary exception. As He is crossing from Bethany on the Monday of the Passion-week, early in the morning, before the great influx of worshippers at this festive season would throng the Temple, a fig plantation, nigh to the beaten pathway, attracted His eye. "The time of figs was not yet." As a general rule, it was not yet the fig-season, except perhaps in the earlier and more favouring climate of Jericho and Gennesaret. It was therefore altogether premature and precocious at this period of the year (the end of March) for a fig-tree to be in full foliage, and especially on the comparatively elevated region of the Mount of Olives. While, however, the fig-orchard, now visible, was still destitute of leaves—or, at

all events, these were only in embryo—one abnormal and exceptional member of the group is covered with foliage, giving reason to infer that the figs also were ripe and ready for gathering.

You may be aware of the peculiarity in the fig-tree, that the fruit, contrary to the ordinary order of development in the vegetable kingdom, appears *before the leaves;* so that the spectacle of a tree in full leaf, afforded ground to believe that fruit would be found thereon.* Our blessed Lord approaches it, as if He had a right thus to expect, from its leafy appearance, that it should be covered with figs. He finds it to be a mass of pretentious foliage—nothing else; and He utters against it a withering curse. On returning by the same road, that afternoon, to His mountain home, the shades of eventide prevented the disciples noting how literally the blighting word had taken effect. But the next morning, as they are again wending their way to the city, the withered, blasted stem and drooping leaves arrest their attention: "Master," said Peter, "behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away," (Mark xi. 21.) Undoubtedly for this strange exception to the wonted tenderness of Christ's miracles, there must be some special reason: a loving Redeemer punishing, and that, too, not a moral, responsible agent, but a dumb unconscious tree. Some peculiar reason indeed there must have been for the miracle at all. Jesus, we may be well assured, did not work it merely

* About this same season, or very shortly before it, the writer crossed the same undoubted pathway, and noted several such trees on which the fig was forming, or formed, while yet the leaves were only in early bud. Not a few of these, in various parts of that undulating bridle-road, touchingly suggested this MEMORY OF OLIVET.

to give farther proof and exhibition of His omnipotence. The withering of a tree would, in itself, be comparatively a small attestation to His power, after the grandeur of Lazarus's resurrection. What, then, meant He? We must go to Himself in the lowly spirit of the disciples, saying, 'Declare unto us the parable and miracle of the fig-tree.'

The preceding day had been an illustrious one. In the week, it corresponded with our Sabbath, and, as we have found, was signalised by what was outwardly the most brilliant OLIVET memory, the Triumphal entrance of the Redeemer into Jerusalem. It closed with an act of sovereign power—the cleansing of the Temple, and the dispersion of the traders, who, with their usurious traffic, were desecrating its sacred precincts. The blighting of the fig-tree forms the completion and complement of this series of expressive symbolic actions, relative to the doom of Jerusalem. And mark the order—the gradation rising to a terrible climax.* *First,* The tender tears—the last pleadings of rejected love. *Second,* The righteous anger at the desecrated Temple-courts, and the figurative dispersion of the Jewish people. *Finally,* and last of all, the impenitent nation, under the type and symbol of a blighted fig-tree, pining and withering away. These together, formed three acted parables—three illustrations in deed, of the dirge He had spoken in words,—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," (Luke xiii. 34, 35.)

* See Stier *in loco.*

Here, then, is the key to this (in some respects, perplexing and enigmatical) incident, in the closing scenes of the Saviour's ministry. That fig-tree is the kingdom of Israel. One thought, next to the great redemption of His Church, seemed, at that time, to occupy the mind of Jesus: it was the nation's downfall and ruin. It drew tears from His eyes. He who wept not for Himself, wept for the despisers of His mercy and long-suffering forbearance. The tears on the brow of OLIVET passed into holy indignation and anger at the sight of the Temple sacrilege; and this again, led these lips, which loved to utter nought but tenderness, to frame a final, irrevocable, sentence of doom. In order to teach and impress the great lesson, He invests, for the time, that dumb fig-tree with moral qualities: He makes it the expositor of a moral truth. And observe how specially and singularly applicable the mute symbol was. The Jewish nation stood forth amid its compeers—the empires of the earth—a proud claimant to goodness and righteousness. The other Gentile kingdoms were in darkness and error. These latter had no fruit on their branches; but then, there was this distinction, they made no boastful pretension of having any. They were empty, poverty-stricken, as the Jew himself; nay, a deeper blindness sealed their eyes. But, unlike the Jew, they made no vaunting boast of spiritual superiority. They felt that, in moral development, it might figuratively be said of them, "The time of figs was not yet:" they were waiting with longing earnestness for the dawning of some better day, which would give life and light to the world. The nation of Israel, on the other hand, sought to stand out in proud, self-confident pre-eminence. It was a fig-tree clothed with

leaves. It had its imposing outward religion,—its hallowed traditions—its boasted Temple—its mitred priests—its phylacteried Pharisees—its morning and evening sacrifices—its fumes of incense—its prophets' sepulchres—its synagogues, and oratories, and mountain-altars: the land was studded with these *outward* monitors and symbols of religious life. Yes, when we think of all these, there were "leaves" enough. But beneath this ostentatious foliage, what was there? Pride — formalism — vain glory — selfishness — oppression. "How striking the image of that theocracy of solemn form, proudly displaying its ceremonials of worship, while the very heart of the nation was become dry and dead as sapless wood."* This ought to have been the confession of that privileged people in the day of their merciful visitation:— 'We, like that fig-tree on our sacred mountain, have had every fostering natural advantage. In a spiritual sense, ours has been the favouring clime, the genial sunshine, the rains and dews of heaven. But we feel and acknowledge that we have perverted and abused these sacred influences. We are naked, leafless, fruitless, unproductive cumberers. All true and acceptable righteousness in us is wanting. Our ancestral law, which should have produced holiness, proclaims our deficiency—utters our condemnation. We participate in the longings of humanity, and of the holiest and best of our nation, for a better righteousness than our own. We feel our need of such a Saviour as that of whom our prophets have thus spoken, "This is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness."

And was not that Saviour in their midst? Had not all

* Pressensé's *Life of Christ.*

the ardent aspirations of the sainted fathers and worthies of Israel met and been fulfilled in the person of "God manifest in the flesh?" Yet, in blinded unbelief, they closed their eyes to irresistible attestations of His divine majesty and power. Though disease fled at His touch, and winds and waves were lulled at His bidding, and devils crouched at His word, and death, at His summons, gave up its reluctant prey, yet 'He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.' In defiant pride, the fruitless fig-tree shook its vaunting branches and foliage before the eye of the heart-searching God, and urged its boastful claim to that of which it was utterly devoid. The Incarnate Redeemer approached in divine-human majesty. He unmasked the pretentious hypocrite, and left it with a blighting doom. Like the earth, which, despite of all genial influences, brought forth only briars and thorns, it was 'rejected,—nigh unto cursing, whose end was to be burned.' And as we come at this day, like the disciples of old on Mount OLIVET, to gaze on this tree once planted by God's right hand, what do we see? It is a nation scattered and peeled. The Jewish race, for eighteen hundred years,—like withered leaves,—carrying the tidings of their curse to the kingdoms of their dispersion.

We can understand, then, the primary meaning and intention of the Saviour in this strange exceptional act among His miracles of mercy—mutilating and destroying a work of His own hands,—it was, that that blighted tree of the fig-forest might take up a parable to the house of Israel. Nothing could be more impressive. There, on one of the heights or undulations of that holy Mount, like the solitary calcined pillar which once overlooked the Vale of Siddim,—

stood a withered thing, all the more conspicuous by contrast with the rich carpet of spring-flowers and verdure which doubtless then, as now, spread around; on its scarred stem the doom written, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."*

But we have not exhausted the divine purpose and meaning in this symbolic action. That stern deed was a prophecy and homily to every age;—a solemn sermon preached for all time, alike for the Church collectively and for believers individually. The Saviour's dooming sentence on the fig-tree, is a searching word to all formalists,—boasting hypocrites,—who stand forth before the world in pretentious leaves, but who are utterly devoid of that which the great Seeker alone values —fruit to His glory. Churches are involved in that doom. Since the introduction of Christianity, down to our own days, have there not been too many examples of leaf-covered, but fruitless fig-trees;—churches with imposing worldly splendour,—fretted aisles—intoned liturgies—venerable relics —dim religious light—gorgeous festivals—priestly and hierarchal orders boasting apostolic succession and sacramental efficacy;—and yet, within all this pomp of circumstance, this imposing ecclesiastical organisation, an utter dearth and destitution of spiritual energy and life? What have all such been, and proved? deceptive leaves—outer foliage, screening and masking utter barrenness,—the outward work of man attempted to be put in the place of the inner work of God;—the pomp of ritual and sensuousness of worship, having the precedence over repentance and faith,—the chasing of the

* The reader is referred to the whole of Archbishop Trench's admirable exposition of this miracle.

casket looked to, more than the enclosed jewel of holiness. Is it not this ostentatious outward profession (clustering foliage without corresponding fruit) which is delineated by an inspired pen, as the attribute of the Church in its latter day of lukewarmness and apostasy? Hear the words of the apostle, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good:" and then, mark how the mournful catalogue is summed up: it is by telling us, that this accursed, cumbering tree—not one branch of which has a redeeming cluster of fruit—is nevertheless clothed with pretentious leaves; for it is added, "Having a *form* of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

Nor does the searching lesson terminate here. The doom of the withered fig-tree has a personal application to individual professors. Who has not seen the living counterpart in the ostentatious Christian, the flaming orthodoxy of whose creed is sadly belied by the daily life,—by the manifestation of selfishness, peevishness, fretfulness, pride, frivolity, discontent, uncharitableness, censoriousness;—no inward crucifixion of sin, no moulding of the heart in conformity with the will of God?—these are the poor, withered, scarred stems, which the leaves of profession overlap and conceal. How Christ again and again, by word and deed, shows how He hates all semblance, pretence, display, unreality. He ever dealt with tenderness to the very chief of sinners. He [redacted] spurned true penitence, however great the guilt, from

His feet. But with what burning invective does He hurl His denunciations against Pharisees, "HYPOCRITES!" Fruitless professor, sad and mournful indeed is your state. There is more hope for the open sinner than for you. Yours is the mimic life of the dumb insensate mummy in the Egyptian sarcophagus. It is the hectic flush in the maiden's cheek,—the appearance of loveliness, the deceitful sign of beauty,—but, in reality, the ominous symbol of inner waste and decay and death. The blight of God's curse is upon thee. "How soon is the fig-tree withered away!"

The great practical deduction from this solemn passage, may be expressed in the words which the old Preacher of the desert addressed to the thronging crowds around him: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." This whole passage, indeed, seems to bring out "the goodness and severity" of Jesus. His goodness and tenderness towards all,—but that goodness when insulted, injured, despised, passing into needful severity and doom! We may mark, too, in these chapters, the same gradation in the case of individuals, we have already noted with reference to the Jewish nation collectively. *First*, There are the tears of divine human emotion; the unutterable sorrow over His rejected overtures of love, as the Redeemer still strives and pleads with the impenitent, saying, "How shall I give thee up?" The next step, is when He enters the soul-temple, and sees it degraded and desecrated with works of darkness and sin,—that soul, with its Godlike chambers converted

into a robber-haunt of Satan, a den of thieves. Then comes the sad climax of all. The soul He has loved, wept over, borne with, entreated, become a doomed, blighted, withered thing, an awful monument of His righteous judgment and avenging wrath!

In these different ways He may be dealing with those whose eyes trace these pages. With some, it may be, in the way of tears and tenderness. Seated on the brow of the Heavenly mount, He may be bending over you in pitying love, and addressing you in words of affectionate expostulation. In the case of others, He may be using sterner means, He may be entering the Temple with the whip of small cords, "driving," with affliction's scourge, these robber spoilers from what He would still reclaim and purify for Himself, saying, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." In the case of others (may there be none such) it is the last, sad, utterance of all. Warning, and expostulation, and forbearance, and patience, are terminated. The tears have wept themselves away; compassion has exhausted its treasures; and the thunder-cloud rises in its stead. He must (awful alternative!) *curse* those who will not receive His blessing,—"Henceforth let no fruit grow upon thee for ever." Oh what a terrible state is this, into which the doomed soul then passes! The tree, the moral, thinking, living agent, is *dead*. Yes, living on, a conscious existence, and yet *dead* while he lives!

There are two ways by which God deals with incorrigible sinners, corresponding to the two ways He dealt with the two fig-trees of the Gospels. Both were cumberers. Both were doomed. But by different methods was their doom consum-

mated. The one was '*cut down.*' After a three years' patient bearing with it, (continuing to resist all efforts to make it fruitful,) the insulted Husbandman clears the grass around the stem; the axe descends; it lies prone on the ground, stripped, bared, plucked up by the roots; the place which once knew it knows it no more! The dealing with the other is different. It still keeps its place in the plantation. But it is a naked, lonely, blighted stem, bearing upon it the curse of permanent unfruitfulness. It needs not a judgment to come. It is judged, 'condemned already'—"I the Lord have dried up the green tree," (Ezek. xvii. 24.) The awful doom is consummated in silence. There is no audible voice to record its fulfilment; no avenging angel descends to pour his vial on the stem of the fig-tree; no horde of devouring locusts to strip its leaves; no tempest to wrestle with its branches. Unlike the symbolical vine of Egypt, no boar out of the wood doth waste it, no wild beast of the field doth devour it. God simply withdraws the agencies which have been so long repelled and resisted,—the moistening rains and the reviving sunshine, which, in the case of others have quickened life and fruitfulness. Like Gilboa, on whose arid top, amid its sisterhood of mountains, the refreshing dew seems, to this day, in accordance with the old maleson, to fall in vain,—the barren tree stands in its life of death, given up by God,—"Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone,"—"Let no fruit henceforth grow upon thee for ever!" Yes! I repeat, awful indeed such a case as this. *Abandoned!* Like that picture of the abandoned vessel, so truthfully delineated by the pencil of a great modern painter, a hulk on the wide sea, abandoned to its fate, the sport of

winds and waves and ruffian elements, an unwieldy log on the great waters, without mast, or sail, or helm, or crew, drifting, drifting onwards along the trough of the ocean, amid the bleak howling winds and wastes of a dark and cheerless eternity!

'*For ever*,' '*irreversible*,' did I say? Nay, not so! God speaks of those who are 'nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.' "But the end is not yet;"—while there is life there is hope. In the middle acted parable to which we have adverted, (the driving from the Temple,) there is an incident of blessed significance introduced. Jesus healed the diseased; "And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them," (Matt. xxi. 14.) It was an evidence interjected in the midst of righteous retribution, that 'in wrath He remembers mercy;' that even now, that heart of Divine power and human love is a hoarded garner of pity and compassion, open to all who will avail themselves of its treasures.

And as we know that for the Jew, there is a blessed future of hope and mercy, when the stripped fig-tree shall again be clothed with foliage and laden with fruit;—that the "for ever" in his case, has its limitation terminated by the close of the Christian dispensation, when "all Israel shall be saved,"—("Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh;")—so we dare never, to one lost soul on this side the grave, shut the door of pardon. "For ever" is the fearful word for the dungeons of despair. Mercy, pardon, forgiveness, are still words for the living. There is a summer-time of grace ever nigh, even in the dreariest

winter of spiritual desolation. God is giving us a *reprieve.* Every new day is such;—another chance of salvation, another offer of mercy, before the knell of the soul be rung for ever! Prisoners: but "Prisoners of hope." Yes, go stand by that stripped, dumb, silent fig-tree, on the crest of OLIVET, and while you behold there an awful witness to the Redeemer's wrath, look at the same time at that sister fig-tree to which He pointed, at an earlier date of His ministry, in the regions of Galilee. He came to *it,* as He comes to each one of us, expecting "fruit;" "I *looked* that it should bring forth fruit." There was none. Is it doomed at once? No; an all-prevailing Intercessor pleads for one other year of respite and mercy,—one other year to dig about its roots, one other blessed chance of hope and forgiveness; and *then,* if there be no fruit, "after that," to cut it down. 'After *that*'—who can tell how brief the duration? 'After *that*'—it may be a measured, meted out, perchance nearly-exhausted season, for some one of us! Reader, self-convicted and self-condemned, are you led in prayerful penitence to exclaim—'Lord, I am that fig-tree; the message of this 'memory' is for *me.* That one year of gracious respite and reprieve, oh *let me* improve it! There may be but some weeks of it, some days of it, yet to run. A few more swings of the pendulum, and the time so graciously included in "*after that,*" will have fled for ever, beyond the possibility of recall. Oh spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more'?

And if we would add one word more, it is a closing gospel thought, suggested by the fig-foliage of this parable-miracle. It was with the pretentious leaves of this same

tree, that Adam and Eve, in Paradise, sought to cover their nakedness. God stripped away the leafy garments, and provided them instead, with the hides—the skins of the animals slain on the sacrificial altar. That was the earliest of the Bible's acted parables. It was a Gospel Parable uttered in Eden, but one full of gracious comfort to the Church in every age. The fig-tree clothing of self-righteousness is utterly unavailing; the Lord who walks amid the trees of the garden strips it away: it cannot abide His righteous glance, His avenging scrutiny. But He has a blessed substitute at hand. He has woven, into a divine texture, the leaves of the Tree of life for the healing of the nations. "I will bring near," says He, "my righteousness;"—the covering, the glorious vesture provided by the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. He reveals "the righteousness of Christ, which is unto all and upon all them that believe." Oh! dead, barren fig-tree, lift up thy drooping withered leaves and live. "For *whosoever believeth in* HIM *shall not* PERISH, *but shall have* EVERLASTING LIFE."

XII.

Prophecies of the Mount.

The First Coming in Judgment to Jerusalem.

"AND JESUS WENT OUT, AND DEPARTED FROM THE TEMPLE: AND HIS DISCIPLES CAME TO HIM, FOR TO SHEW HIM THE BUILDINGS OF THE TEMPLE. AND JESUS SAID UNTO THEM, SEE YE NOT ALL THESE THINGS? VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THERE SHALL NOT BE LEFT HERE ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER, THAT SHALL NOT BE THROWN DOWN. AND AS HE SAT UPON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, THE DISCIPLES CAME UNTO HIM PRIVATELY, SAYING, TELL US, WHEN SHALL THESE THINGS BE? AND WHAT SHALL BE THE SIGN OF THY COMING, AND OF THE END OF THE WORLD?"—MATT. XXIV. 1–3, &c., &c.

THE FIRST COMING IN JUDGMENT TO JERUSALEM.

We now come to a new and distinct group of "Olivet Memories." They embrace a striking series of prophecies and parables, uttered in succession on the same occasion, beginning with the prediction of the impending doom of Jerusalem, and ending with that magnificent scene of the last universal assize,—the great Shepherd of mankind seated on His Judgment-throne, dividing the sheep from the goats, and apportioning to each their final and irrevocable destiny.* These impressive themes were spoken on the evening of the Tuesday—the same day which had witnessed, at early morn, the withering of the fig-tree. The tears of Jesus the previous afternoon as He beheld the fated city; the parable uttered through the pretentious leaves of that dumb monitor and their subsequent blighting, reveal the one overmastering thought, which, almost to the exclusion of His own personal impending sufferings, filled the soul of the Divine Philanthropist. We need not wonder if, in the predictions and parables which are now to occupy our attention, we have to listen to the same plaintive monotone, and the same reiterated lesson of self-scrutiny, watchfulness, and diligence.

* This latter is omitted from the present volume, having been already treated by the writer in a recent work, "*The Shepherd and His Flock.*"

The Redeemer was on His accustomed journey to Bethany. He and His disciples had crossed the Kedron, but instead of pursuing the shorter pathway, He seems, as of purpose, to have taken the longer caravan road—the same which, the previous day, He had traversed on the occasion of His triumphal entrance, and from which, as already explained, the city appears, despite of the intervening gorge, so peculiarly near. Seated on the slope of the Mount, when the sun was going down, and the deep shadows of the Temple were cast athwart the Jehoshaphat Valley, Christ uttered the startling and significant prophecy which heads this chapter. He had just before, for the last time, bid adieu to these hallowed courts, after pronouncing, in their midst, a vehement denunciation against the prevailing hypocrisy of the Jewish rulers. He had, previous to this, thrown out a casual reference to the overthrow of the Temple; and the disciples were probably desirous of receiving more accurate information on a subject of such moment, alike to themselves and to their countrymen. With this intent, they direct the eye of their Lord to the magnificent pile of buildings, which, after the long labour of forty-six years, were now being completed. Magnificent they were. It is almost necessary, for the full appreciation of the Saviour's utterances, and to comprehend all that was involved in His too truthful premonitions of coming woe, that we have before our mind's eye a vivid picture of the city, which, on that memorable Easter eve, rose like some scene of fabled enchantment before the gaze of this Prince of Seers,—as after the manner of the olden prophets, and with equally graphic and thrilling detail, He

forecasts and bewails "the Burden of Jerusalem." There was truly no hyperbole—no poetical license or exaggeration in the words of the minstrel King, which we have more than once already quoted, as applied to that "perfection of beauty," beheld at that sunset hour—"Beautiful for situation; the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the Great King!" Who need wonder, that one of those whose eyes then gazed upon this earthly "apocalyptic vision" should afterwards, when the visions of Heavenly glory were stealing over him, have made the transcendent human scene suggestive of a grander and more enduring verity—"the holy city, the new Jerusalem," with its gates of pearl, and its streets of gold "coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," (Rev. xxi. 2.) Josephus is, of course, our main authority in obtaining an impression of the greatness and grandeur of the Jewish capital at this time. It were easy to collate and condense, from his ample pages, material which has been frequently thus called into requisition. Rather than in my own words, however, I prefer to give these facts as they are at once carefully collected and graphically described by the venerable living historian of "The Decline and Fall of Jerusalem."

"The whole circuit of her walls was guarded with towers, built of the same solid masonry. They were 35 feet broad, and 35 feet high. Ninety of these towers stood in the first wall, fourteen in the second, and sixty in the third. The intervals between the towers were about 350 feet. The circuit of the city, according to Josephus, was 33 stadia —rather more than 4 miles. The most magnificent of all

these towers was that of Psephina. It was 122½ feet high, and commanded a noble view of the whole territory of Judea, to the border of Arabia, and to the sea: it was an octagon. Answering to this was the tower Hippicus, and, following the old wall, stood those of Mariamne and Phasaelis, built by Herod, and named after his brother and friend, and his wife. These were stupendous, even as works of Herod; the masonry was perfect: they were built of white marble, cut in blocks, so fitted, that the towers seemed hewn out of the solid quarry. Within these towers stood the palace of the kings, of the most extraordinary size and splendour. It was surrounded by a wall 35 feet high, which was adorned by towers at equal distances, and by spacious barrack-rooms, with 100 beds in each. It was paved with every variety of rare marble; timbers of unequalled length and workmanship supported the roofs. The chambers were countless, adorned with all kinds of figures, the richest furniture, and vessels of gold and silver. There were numerous cloisters of columns of different orders, the squares within of beautiful verdure; around were groves and avenues, with fountains and tanks, and bronze statues pouring out the water. The fortress Antonia stood alone, on a precipitous rock near 90 feet high, at the north-west corner of the temple. It was likewise a work of Herod. The whole face of the rock was fronted with smooth stone for ornament, and to make the ascent so slippery as to be impracticable; round the top of the rock there was first a low wall, rather more than 5 feet high. The fortress was 70 feet in height. It had every luxury and convenience of a sumptuous palace, or even of a city; spacious halls, courts,

and baths. It appeared like a vast square tower, with four other towers at each corner; three of them between 80 and 90 feet high: that at the corner next to the Temple above 120. From this the whole Temple might be seen, and broad flights of steps led down into the northern and western cloisters or porticoes, in which, during the Roman government, their guard was stationed. High above the whole city rose the Temple, uniting the commanding strength of a citadel, with the splendour of a sacred edifice. According to Josephus, the esplanade on which it stood had been considerably enlarged by the accumulation of fresh soil, since the days of Solomon, particularly on the north side. It now covered a square of a furlong each side. Solomon had faced the precipitous sides of the rock on the east, and perhaps the south, with huge blocks of stone; the other sides likewise had been built up with perpendicular walls to an equal height. These walls in no part were lower than 300 cubits, (525 feet;) but their whole height was not seen, excepting on the eastern and perhaps the southern sides, as the earth was heaped up to the level of the streets of the city. On this gigantic foundation ran on each front a strong and lofty wall without; within, a spacious double portico or cloister 52½ feet broad, supported by 162 columns, which supported a cedar ceiling of the most exquisite workmanship. The pillars were entire blocks hewn out of solid marble, of dazzling whiteness, 43¾ feet high. . . . The open courts were paved with various inlaid marbles. Between this outer court of the Gentiles, and the second court of the Israelites, ran rails of stone, but of beautiful workmanship, rather more than five feet high. Along these, at regular intervals,

stood pillars with inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, —warning all strangers, and Jews who were unclean, from entering into the Holy Court beyond. An ascent of 14 steps led to a terrace 17½ feet wide, beyond which arose the wall of the Inner Court. . . . Around this court ran another splendid range of porticoes or cloisters; the columns were quite equal in beauty and workmanship, though not in size, to those of the outer portico. Nine of these gates, or rather gateway towers, were richly adorned with gold and silver on the doors, the door-posts, and the lintels. The doors of each of the nine gates were 52½ feet high, and half of that breadth. Within, the gateways were 52½ feet wide and deep, with rooms on each side, so that the whole looked like lofty towers: the height from the base to the summit was 70 feet. Each gateway had two lofty pillars 21 feet in circumference. But that which excited the greatest admiration was the tenth, usually called the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. It was of Corinthian brass of the finest workmanship. The height of the Beautiful Gate was 87½, its doors 70 feet. The father of Tiberius Alexander had sheeted these gates with gold and silver. . . . Within this quadrangle there was a further separation; a low wall which divided the priests from the Israelites; near this stood the great brazen altar. Beyond, the Temple itself reared its glittering front. The great porch or propyleon, according to the design of the last, or Herod's Temple, extended to a much greater width than the body of the Temple; in addition to the former width of 105 feet, it had two wings of 35 each, making in the whole 175. The great gate of this last quadrangle, to which there was an ascent of

twelve steps, was called that of Nicanor. The gateway tower was 132½ feet high, 43½ wide: it had no doors, but the frontispiece was covered with gold, and through its spacious arch was seen the golden gate of the Temple glittering with the same precious metal, with large plates of which it was sheeted all over. Above this gate hung the celebrated golden Vine. This extraordinary piece of workmanship had bunches, according to Josephus, as large as a man. The Rabbins add that 'like a true natural vine, it grew greater and greater. Men would be offering, some gold, to make a leaf, some a grape, some a bunch: and these were hung up upon it, and so it was increasing continually.' The Temple itself, excepting in the extension of the wings of the propyleon, was probably the same in its dimensions and distribution with that of Solomon. It contained the same holy treasures, if not of equal magnificence, yet by the zeal of successive ages the frequent plunder to which it had been exposed, was constantly replaced; and within, the golden candlestick spread out its flowering branches; the golden table supported the show-bread, and the altar of incense flamed with its costly perfume. The roof of the Temple had been set all over on the outside with sharp golden spikes, to prevent the birds from settling and defiling it; and the gates were still sheeted with plates of the same splendid metal. At a distance, the whole Temple looked literally like 'a mount of snow, fretted with golden pinnacles.'" *

Such was Jerusalem—the Jerusalem of the days of the Incarnation—the Jerusalem whose devoted battlements

* Dean Milman's *History of the Jews*, vol. ii. p. 39, *et seq.*, last edition.

and glittering masses of white marble, as seen from the green sward of OLIVET, were reddened, at the moment we are now to speak of, with 'the last fires of day.' It may be worthy here of passing observation, that Herod's own taste for architectural splendour, manifested in the decoration and beautifying of the capital, was seconded and encouraged by the lavish gifts of his Imperial master, and that among these, the Emperor had forwarded for the Temple many blocks of white marble, of almost fabulous size. It was (according to St Mark) these colossal stones, to which the disciples specially called the attention of Christ. "Master, see what manner of *stones* and what buildings are here!" * Their remark elicits the brief and startling reply, "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Jesus seems to have invited a continuation of the theme. Seating Himself on one of those grassy ridges, familiar still to every pilgrim in Palestine, opposite the sacred courts and porticoes, and where full in sight were those same ponderous stones,† He allows them farther to interrogate Him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" It gives the Divine Prophet an opportunity of uttering a

* Mark xiii. 1.

† Several gigantic masses of masonry still remain, in the substructure of the old Temple, as if to bear silent attestation to "the manner of stones." The dimensions of these might well be designated "fabulous," were there not several still to be seen (which the writer has witnessed,) in the Temple of Baalbec, of even vaster magnitude than those referred to by Josephus in connexion with the Temple of Jerusalem. One of the former is 69 feet in length, 13 in depth, and 18 in breadth, containing 16·146 cubic feet of stone; while those specified by Josephus are only 37½ feet long, 12 wide, and 8 high.

great prediction regarding the future—a prediction that would serve at once to authenticate His mission, prove a beacon and landmark to His Church for all time, and form an incentive for the cultivation of a spirit of watchfulness and prayer.

This profound and enigmatical prophecy, many of whose utterances can only be understood by their fulfilment, is made more lucid and determinate, when, like most of the Old Testament predictions, we interpret it on what is known as the *double* theory,—a partial and primary, interwoven with a secondary and ultimate fulfilment. This principle has been so amply expounded by theological writers, that it is unnecessary at any length to dwell upon it. The prophecies in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are intelligible and consistent, alone when viewed in accordance with this double interpretation. When these seers speak in glowing figure of the brilliant future awaiting Judah and Israel, their predictions had a primary and partial fulfilment, in the return from the Babylonish captivity and the rebuilding of the Temple, under Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and Joshua. But this was only the first instalment, so to speak, of a far vaster deliverance under a greater than Cyrus, or than any earthly potentate; pointing to a future which is to eclipse in splendour all the brightest epochs of their past; when in a nobler sense than has ever yet been realised, Zion shall be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God."

Shall we take, as an example of this interpretation, one of David's prophetical Psalms? Ps. lxxii. may doubtless, in the first instance, be regarded as an ode, (the

last the aged king wrote,) celebrating the prospective glories of the Kingdom of Judah, under the reign of Solomon. The opening verses seem to indicate no more;—"Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son: He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment." But, as we proceed with the Psalm, there are expressions which meet us, exaggerated, extravagant, unnatural, if we restrict their application to the temporal prosperity of the Kingdom of Judah, or if we refer them to any mere human sovereign:—"His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." Who can for a moment hesitate to aver, that "a greater than Solomon is here?" Daniel's well-known prophecy regarding "the little Horn," may have had its partial fulfilment in the invasion and persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, in the time of the Maccabees; but who can doubt it has had its full completion in a more subtle and spiritual Antichrist invading "the Holy place"? Joel's prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit, had its primary fulfilment in the events of Pentecost; but we cannot read the entire prophecy, without inferring, that there will be a plenary fulfilment in a mightier baptism of fire yet awaiting the Church, when God will "shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth; blood and fire and pillars of smoke." Or to take one other example. In the opening of the sixth seal in the Book of Revelation, there is a thrilling figurative description there given, of a blackened sun and blood-red moon, falling stars and bursting rocks, the heaven rolled together as a scroll, and mountains and islands jostled and

displaced in the terrific confusion,—kings and potentates fleeing affrighted from the catastrophe, screening themselves amid rocks, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth, addressing to inanimate nature wild apostrophes of terror. Almost all prophetical expositors of Revelation, have referred the fulfilment of this figurative scene (from its chronological position in the prophecy) to the subversion of the Pagan religion in the Roman Empire, and the national establishment of Christianity in its place. Here, again, however, the language would be utterly extravagant—a violent rhetorical exaggeration—if these political changes exhausted its meaning. Such a burst of terrific poetry would be quite out of place, if we entertain no thought of an ulterior meaning and fulfilment. But who ever has read that passage, from the child to the grown man, but feels irresistibly that he is in the midst of the drama of Judgment, and that the Great day of the wrath of the Lamb, which is there spoken of as having "come," when sinners shall importunately call on mountains and rocks to fall upon them and crush them—is that tremendous hour, when "the Lord shall arise in the glory of His majesty to shake terribly the earth!"

Now if we apply the same canon of interpretation to this prophecy of our Lord's, it will greatly simplify and elucidate its meaning. There is here, too, a primary and partial, and also a future and complete fulfilment. It is a specimen of what Lord Bacon calls "the germinating teachings" of Scripture—one event developing another—one application suggesting another. Indeed the interrogatory of the disciples furnishes, in this, a key to the whole. That interrogative address, if we examine it attentively, is composed,

not of one, but of two questions. These, our blessed Lord answers consecutively, although in the reply here, as in most prophecies, the primary and the secondary,—the partial and complete fulfilment—are blended and intermingled.*

The questions were, (1.) "Tell us when shall these things be?"—*i.e.*, the destruction and overthrow of the Jewish Temple and city; (2.) "and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Much of the ambiguity associated with this chapter arises from treating these two questions as one, instead of keeping them distinct and separate.

Let us proceed to examine the first question, "*When shall these things be?*"

The disciples had had previously intimated to them the approaching dissolution and overthrow of the Jewish state.

* Dr Pressensé thus admirably expresses the application of this same theory to the passage under consideration in his thoughtful and philosophical Treatise on the Life and Work of Christ:—

"The main idea of the prophetical discourse of Jesus, is to make all these partial judgments of history lead on to the final and decisive judgment, but there is no marked line of distinction anywhere drawn between impending events and the issues of the last times. The destruction of the theocracy is confounded with those great final throes out of which will come forth the new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. Prophecy gives its broad survey without perspective. All this prophetic painting of the events which accompany the destruction of Jerusalem, is set in a wider picture, which is nothing less than that of the final crisis of the human history, (Matt. xxiv. 15–31.) These wars, pestilences, and earthquakes, which are but the beginning of sorrows; this preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, which is to be the witness to all nations, are so many signs carrying us onward to the last times, no less than the conclusion of the discourse which represents the sun and moon veiled with sudden darkness, the stars falling from heaven, the Son of Man appearing before the trembling tribes of the earth, and the elect rising at the sound of the archangel's trumpet."—Page 485.

But they were still unacquainted with the period at which that overthrow was to happen. They had heard also of the Lord's "second coming"; but they were all in ignorance as to its nature and character. Well it was for them, as it is for us, that the future is veiled. Two awful facts were at that moment known to their Divine Master—(known also indeed to them, but their knowledge of which, in comparison with His, was shadowy and indefinite)—the two facts were these—their Redeemer's sufferings and death, and the total destruction of their city and Temple, along with the massacre of their countrymen. If these awful verities had stood forth as prominently before *their* mental vision as they did before *His*, the contemplation would have overwhelmed them: like brittle reeds they would have bent and quailed before the storm.

With regard to the latter, their thoughts, we know, to the last, lingered on the establishment of a temporal kingdom; and even now, when their Divine Master uttered His prediction about the overthrow of the city, they would doubtless associate that event with His personal coming, in temporal sovereignty, to assume the reins of empire, inflicting vengeance on impenitent Jews, and effecting the expulsion of Pagan Romans. They knew from their Lord's own lips, that He was to come a *second* time. Might not His judgment on Jerusalem be contemporaneous with His coming in earthly pomp and splendour? In the lightning-flash which was to rend asunder these temples and towers, might not Zebedee's children, who were now listening to Him, fancy they saw the sign and inauguration of that regal dream of glory which another had de-

sired for them, and which they still perhaps, in their carnal blindness, entertained and clung to—the 'thrones,' and the partition of the 'twelve tribes'? Possibly, from a previous statement of their Lord, when they were with Him in northern Palestine, they would not unnaturally draw a similar conclusion regarding this coincidence of the overthrow of Jerusalem with His triumphant reign,—"Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," (Matt. xvi. 28.)

As already noted, all prophecy is purposely ambiguous,—delivered, if I might so express it, in a skeleton form, afterwards to be clothed with flesh and blood,—a graphic outline or cartoon, which requires the fulfilment to give it embodiment and completion. While the Redeemer here unfolds to His disciples future events (in accordance with His wonted prophetical method) in designed shadow and mystery,—yet it is in language abundantly perspicuous too, for their guidance, and warning, and comfort. He sets before their eyes two vivid pictures, like the dissolving views in a diorama, meeting and merging into one another: or rather it is *one* picture, embracing two great events;—His own two advents. The first coming, of which we now speak, not in person, but in power, at the destruction of Jerusalem, occupies the foreground of the picture. His second coming, at the end of the world, fills the background. The personal pronouns, the '*you*' and the '*ye*' of this earlier part of the chapter, sufficiently indicate, that the first coming was one in which the generation of living men—the living hearers around Him, would have a direct interest. It is the prediction of awful

judgment on the apostate nation; and specially of retributive vengeance for the guilt of His own rejection and death. Brief was the period of forty years that was to intervene between the utterance and the fulfilment.* The whole of the premonitory signs He here speaks of, were to be crowded into that short space. (1.) Jerusalem itself was to be rent and dislocated by internal feuds and divisions. (2.) All the arrows in the quiver of God were to be let loose. Wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. (3.) There was to be outward persecution of the Church,—affliction, martyrdom, death itself. "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." (4.) In addition to this, there would be the sad accompaniment of coldness and apostasy in the Church itself:—Iniquity would abound, and "the love of many wax cold." Not the least remarkable of these premonitions was the final one, that the gospel would be preached as a witness throughout all the known world; and then the hour would strike for Jerusalem's awful doom. That doom was to come with appalling suddenness,—with the speed of the lightning flash. But a special warning sign was to be given to the handful of true Christians, to ensure their safety before the thundercloud burst. When they were to see "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet," they were to betake themselves by instant flight to a refuge-city, *Pella*, in the land of Perea, on the other side of Jordan. But so speedily was judgment to follow the gracious monitory symbol, whatever that symbol might be, that if a man were at prayer on the flat roof of his house, he would have no time

* The siege of Titus took place in A.D. 73.

to descend by the inner staircase to the court and escape by the street: he must speed his way, as best he could, from roof to roof, till he reach the city-wall, and be saved "yet so as by fire." Also those working in the fields or vineyards around the city, must not even take time to return for the garment they have laid aside while toiling under a vernal sun, but haste them as they are, like the manslayer of old, for the unsparing avenger would be already on their track.

We have the testimony of contemporary heathen and Jewish historians, that all the preliminaries here specified by Christ, were to the letter fulfilled. Josephus, though himself a Jewish priest, and personally antagonistic to the religion of Jesus, is, in the present instance, the unconscious interpreter of the truth of Christianity. He records in his history the many petty tumults and insurrections which took place in Judea after our Lord's ascension. In less than two years four Roman emperors had been assassinated, and internecine struggles were the result. In the reign of Claudius, famine raged in Palestine and the neighbouring countries. Tacitus, the Roman historian, mentions a plague which, in one month, in Rome alone, swept away thirty thousand. Earthquakes of great number occurred along all the borders of the Mediterranean, and with special violence in Judea itself. When our Lord was born, the temple of Janus was shut: not only did peace reign throughout the Roman world, but the Jews, as a portion of that colossal empire, enjoyed immunity from "the grievousness of war." No sooner, however, had they been guilty of the foul crime of crucifying the Lord of glory, than the sword started from its scabbard; and His own saying received a terrible and truthful fulfilment—

"With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Moreover, before the expiry of forty years, the Gospel was preached, by the noble apostolic band, throughout every quarter of the then known earth; although in conjunction with this, Juvenal, Tacitus, and Suetonius record the frightful persecutions to which Christians were subjected, and especially in the Roman capital. Nor are "the signs and wonders" that were "to deceive many," left unnoted by the Jewish historian. Though these were, more than probably, the offspring of superstitious terror, we may mention them as alike the fulfilment of the Saviour's words and also as indicative of the state of unquiet fretfulness in the Jewish mind,—the forebodings of guilty disaster and doom. He records the appearance of a comet, resembling a sword, which for a year hung over the city: an unnatural halo or light which hovered by night round the Temple and altar: chariots mustering for battle in the clouds: mysterious voices in the Temple-courts, uttering the warning sound, "Let us depart hence." "The eastern gate," says he, "of the Inner Court, which was of brass, and vastly heavy—being with difficulty shut by twenty men, and having bolts fastened deep into the firm pavement—was seen, at the sixth hour of the night, to be open of its own accord." He farther narrates, that a countryman, calling himself "*Saviour*," a false Christ, continued crying out for the space of seven years and five months, "Woe to Jerusalem!" He had commenced his plaintive exclamation four years before the war broke out, during the Feast of Tabernacles. Day and night he rushed through the streets of the city, with the wild dirge—"A voice from the east; a voice from the west;

a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem and the Temple; a voice against the bridegroom and the brides; and a voice against all the people." Scourged as a madman, he yet refused to be silenced—at every fresh descent of the whip, his cry was, "Woe to Jerusalem!" till in the midst of the siege he had foretold, a stone felled him to the earth.

Let us gather for a little around the true SAVIOUR, who, as He is seated, in this chapter, on the brow of OLIVET—seated on the same spot which the army of Titus so soon after occupied—is crying with prophetic voice—"*Woe to Jerusalem!*" Humanly speaking, that utterance seemed an idle tale. No symptom or symbol of coming disaster could be seen, in gazing on that wonderful city. The same writer, from whom we have quoted as the historian, is also the minstrel of "The Fall of Jerusalem." We may here appropriately insert his glowing description of that vision of loveliness on which the eye of Incarnate Glory fell—the city which seemed, with no presumptuous arrogance, to utter the words—"I sit as queen and shall see no sorrow."

As on our Olive-crown'd hill we stand,
Where Kedron at our feet its scanty waters
Distils from stone to stone with gentle motion,
As through a valley sacred to sweet peace,
How boldly doth it front us! how majestically!
Like a luxurious vineyard, the hillside
Is hung with marble fabrics, line o'er line,
Terrace o'er terrace, nearer still, and nearer,
To the blue heavens. Here bright and sumptuous palaces,
With cool and verdant gardens interspersed;
Here towers of war that frown in massy strength,
While over all, hangs the rich purple eve.
. . . . Behold the Temple
In undisturb'd and lone serenity,
Finding itself a solemn sanctuary

> In the profound of heaven! It stands before us
> A mount of snow, fretted with golden pinnacles!
> The very sun, as though he worshipped there,
> Lingers upon the gilded cedar roofs:
> And down the long and branching porticoes
> On every flowery scupltured capital
> Glitters the homage of his parting beams.*

Yes: *Jerusalem* was at this time true to its name, "the city of *peace*." Under Herod, not only as we have seen, had it been girded with new strength and beauty, but by its towers, and walls, and fortresses, "frowning in massy strength," and its natural situation, it had, humanly speaking, been rendered impregnable. And yet, with a tear in His eye and a pang from the depths of His heart, that Divine Spectator sees, in awful perspective, its foundations swept—the plough of the conqueror dragged over its ruins, its Holy of Holies defiled, not one stone left upon another: the prophecy of Micah literally fulfilled, "Zion shall be ploughed like a field," (Micah iii. 12.) He would have been considered madman and fool who, on human calculation, would, at this time, have ventured on such a prediction. But "Heaven and Earth," says Christ, "shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Terribly and circumstantially was the declaration verified, "There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be," (ver. 21.) This was strong language. Doubtless its full meaning and truthfulness, in the secondary prophetical meaning, has yet to be unfolded. But with awful literality, too, had these words their accomplishment in the siege of Jerusalem. Indeed, the utterances of the Saviour are almost

* Milman's *Fall of Jerusalem.*

verbally echoed by Josephus, who says, "All the calamities which have befallen any nation from the beginning of the world, are but small in comparison with those of the Jews." Being the season of the Passover, when the army of Titus made its last desperate assault, upwards of three millions were gathered, as was the Hebrew wont, to celebrate the national festival. Their provision-stores had, a few years previously, been destroyed. Hence the horrors of starvation beggars all description. The tender feelings of humanity seemed for the time extinguished. The children would be seen tearing the morsels out of their parents' mouths; the old men, grasping their food with enfeebled hands, were beaten; and the hair of the women torn in the struggle, till they surrendered the miserable crumbs which were avariciously clutched. A measure of wheat was sold for a talent. Thousands would steal, under cover of night, to stay the rage of hunger, by devouring the herbs and wild plants growing outside the city, although in most cases their boldness subjected them to torture and death; some would gnaw the very leather on their shields and sandals; others would rake the dunghills for any scrap of sustenance; the lanes were filled with the dead and the dying; the prisons were crowded with the sick; and the challenge of the prophet, "Can a woman forget her sucking child," received a terrible reply within these famine-stricken walls:—"The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." If any additional details can make the harrowing tale more sad, it is the statement of Josephus, that the death of the nearest and dearest came to be witnessed with apathy.

The last sad offices of human affection were neglected. The dead lay unburied in ghastly heaps; while the survivors had no tears to shed. Partly from frightful familiarity with this saddest 'reign of terror'—partly from sheer physical debility, the loud Hebrew dirge of other days was exchanged for significant silence, and the living cast an envious glance on those whose sufferings were ended. The city was one vast necropolis; and while the living failed to bury the dead, they were themselves often seen to enter the caves and sepulchres, and lay themselves down in the last long sleep. Even Titus would (if he could) have averted the full measure of Zion's doom. He is said in horror to have spread out his hands to heaven as his eye fell on the hecatombs of corpses in the adjacent valleys. Moreover, gazing with his warriors, (as a nobler Spirit was now doing with His disciples,) from one of the ridges of OLIVET, on the magnificent fane before him; he issued a peremptory order that not a stone of it was to be touched. Before his balistas and catapults had begun their work of devastation, he made an earnest appeal to the Jewish leaders to save him and them the profanation of defiling their sacred place with blood—"I call on your gods," said he; "I call upon my whole army; I call on the Jews who are with me; I call on yourselves to witness, that I do not force you to this crime. Come forth and fight in any other place, and no Roman shall violate your sacred edifice." And for this purpose, too, Josephus himself was employed in a vain mission to induce the infatuated Jews to submit to unconditional surrender. "Cast away your arms," said he, in an appeal of imploring eloquence; "have pity on your country—regard

the beauty of that city you are about to sacrifice.—Who would be the first to put a torch to that Temple? Who would consent that these things should be no more? . . . . You may think I plead for my family. If so, slay them. Nay; take my own blood as a reward—only spare Jerusalem!" His intervention was indignantly spurned; darts were hurled at him, as he stood—their last human mediator—on the top of the wall. A Greater than Titus had uttered the counter-order—"Not one stone is to be left!" A firebrand was thrown by a Roman soldier through an aperture in one of the porticoes: the Temple was in a blaze, and thousands on thousands of hapless Jews, shouting "ICHABOD," perished in its ashes. That was a day (the 10th of August) of terrible memory. Titus was resting in his tent after the fatigues of the last conflict, when the tidings were borne to him that the Temple had been fired. He rushed in haste to the spot, followed by his generals and picked legionaries. With a loud voice, he called on them to desist and quench the flames. But nothing could arrest the fury of the soldiers. Each vied with the other in consummating the catastrophe, hurling blazing brands into the sacred precincts, and following, sword in hand, to complete the tragedy of blood. When he saw the attempt was vain to save the outer porticoes, he renewed his efforts to prevent the Holy Place being involved in the conflagration. But in this, too, he was unsuccessful. The soldiers, in the glare of the flames, saw the sacred walls begirt with gold and priceless treasure:—goaded on with the lust of plunder, combined with furious rage against the Jews, no human power could interpose. The Temple steps became a

cataract of blood. "The whole summit of the hill which commanded the city blazed like a volcano; one after another the buildings fell in with a tremendous crash, and were swallowed up in the fiery abyss. The roofs of cedar were like sheets of flame: the gilded pinnacles shone like spikes of red light: the gate towers sent up tall columns of flame and smoke. The neighbouring hills were lighted up; and dark groups of people were seen watching, in horrible anxiety, the progress of the destruction." * The burning lurid tide rolled on, and the frantic cries of old men, children, and priests, mingled in the loud roar of the crackling flames, so that the very mountains around, in the words of the Jewish historian, seemed to give back the echo. And after Temple and tower had bowed before fire and sword and battering-ram, we are told by the same minute chronicler of this scene of misery, that on the hallowed slope, along the ravine of Jehoshaphat, and at Calvary (wherever its now disputed locality might be) so thickly were crosses planted, that there was scarce room to move among them. "The Jews were first whipped, and then tormented with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were then crucified before the wall of the city;" so terribly had the profane prayer, which resounded nigh that spot forty years before, been ratified and fulfilled, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Not only was every stone of the Temple demolished, but, as if to complete to the letter the prophetic fulfilment, Terentius Rufus —one of the generals of Titus—an Edomite by birth, dragged the ploughshare over the ruins, as if his deed had indited the prayer uttered a thousand years before—

* Milman's History of the Jews.

"Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof," (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.)

"Wheresoever," said our Lord, "the carcase is." This carcase was evidently the Jewish nation—the corrupt, putrid, body politic—its life and glory gone—which God had given over to the eagles and vultures to prey upon. It may be a mere interpretation of fancy on the part of old prophetical writers, which has made the eagles here, to refer to the symbol on the imperial standards of Rome,—the eagles of Titus congregated to plunge their talons into this decaying carcase. There is at least something remarkable in the figure, even should it be no more than a coincidence. Truly never had eagle or vulture such a banquet as this:—never was there such evidence before given in the world, of God's hatred at sin, and His determination to punish it! A million and a half were put to death in the capital and suburbs;—besides an additional hundred thousand sent into captivity;—some consigned to slavery; some reserved to grace the conquerors' triumph—a miserable remnant sent to be torn by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatres.* And "they shall be led captive into all nations." Scattered through the world—a carcase among living men—the sentence of death—the curse of abandonment resting upon them; "wheresoever they were:"—it mattered not in what region of the earth—these flying eagles of retribution would track their steps and perpetuate their heritage of woe! This is a dark picture. But we do not linger on the harrowing scene for its own sake. It is a

* In Cesarea Philippi alone, 2500 in this latter manner miserably perished.

mighty lesson—written indeed, like the laws of Draco, in characters of blood—telling us of the certainty of retribution overtaking the guilty. We know not what these eagles may have literally meant in this prophetic chapter: but we do know what they mean, when applied still to the impenitent and unbelieving. The eagles!—they are a man's sins. These winged ministers of evil will be his future tormentors. Oh, the most awful picture of futurity, is that of the sinner being given over to *himself* as his own tyrant and torturer. His soul, the carcase:—the eagles (swift-winged) now hovering around their prey, and ready to pounce upon it, and fasten on it for ever! He has even the shadow and premonition of this, when the eagle of a guilty conscience broods over him and transfixes him with its talons: what will it be, when that conscience is roused with quickened sensibilities; and when the saying of Christ will have its awful, because eternal, verification, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together"? *

We shall reserve, till next chapter, speaking of the second topic—the solemn "coming" of which the other is the dim shadow. The ruin of Jerusalem, and the desolation of Israel to this day, are, together, "*the sign of the Son of Man*"—pledges of the certainty of the final advent,—the warning-bell ringing in the ears of the Church and the world, to all time, "When ye shall see *all these things*," (all that I have said come true; the terrible massacre—the

* "Under what impressions of holy awe and ardent hope, must the disciples have returned to Bethany that evening, when they left the green slope of Olivet, from which they had seen the scroll of the world's history unfolded beneath the awful light of Divine Justice. The public ministry of Jesus is over."—*Pressensé*, p. 488.

world-wide dispersion—the eagles of vengeance tracking Israel to all nations,) "know that it" (or rather, that HE) "is nigh, even at the doors." The destruction of Jerusalem was the first act in this great drama. It was the spark that fell on the mine. The low, rumbling noise is still heard. Men may scoff and doubt and disbelieve, but the spark has fallen, and it is the sign and premonitory symbol of catastrophe to an unbelieving world. The Jew—that poor wanderer, with the curse on his brow,—that putrid carcase with the eagle devouring it, is the guarantee, that if Christ's words were true to the letter regarding the first coming, they will not fail regarding the second.

Reader, have we fled to our refuge? Yes; we shall not leave you with the picture of blood and ruin—the wasted carcase and the unsparing vultures of retribution! In this prophetic chapter, there is hung up, midway, another picture. A PELLA is provided. There is a glorious refuge for every sinner, from the tremendous woe which awaits the impenitent. Haste thee—flee for thy life, lest thou be consumed! Remember, in that unparalleled doom of Jerusalem of old, there perished not one follower of Jesus. If you believe His word and avail yourself of His provided shelter—neither shall one hair of your head be touched. While He has left, on this Mount of OLIVES, 'memories' of awful warning; through the tears and blood which fell upon its sacred sod, nigh where His warnings were uttered, He has left, too, memories of mercy and reconciliation; He proclaims, through these deathless pledges of sympathy and tenderness and yearning love—"As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves and live ye!"

XIII.

Prophecies of the Mount.

The Second Coming in Glory.

"BUT OF THAT DAY AND HOUR KNOWETH NO MAN, NO, NOT THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, BUT MY FATHER ONLY. BUT AS THE DAYS OF NOE WERE, SO SHALL ALSO THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE. FOR AS IN THE DAYS THAT WERE BEFORE THE FLOOD THEY WERE EATING AND DRINKING, MARRYING AND GIVING IN MARRIAGE, UNTIL THE DAY THAT NOE ENTERED INTO THE ARK, AND KNEW NOT UNTIL THE FLOOD CAME, AND TOOK THEM ALL AWAY; SO SHALL ALSO THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE. THEN SHALL TWO BE IN THE FIELD; THE ONE SHALL BE TAKEN, AND THE OTHER LEFT. TWO WOMEN SHALL BE GRINDING AT THE MILL; THE ONE SHALL BE TAKEN, AND THE OTHER LEFT. WATCH THEREFORE; FOR YOU KNOW NOT WHAT HOUR YOUR LORD DOTH COME. BUT KNOW THIS, THAT IF THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE HAD KNOWN IN WHAT WATCH THE THIEF WOULD COME, HE WOULD HAVE WATCHED, AND WOULD NOT HAVE SUFFERED HIS HOUSE TO BE BROKEN UP. THEREFORE BE YE ALSO READY: FOR IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT THE SON OF MAN COMETH. WHO THEN IS A FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT, WHOM HIS LORD HATH MADE RULER OVER HIS HOUSEHOLD, TO GIVE THEM MEAT IN DUE SEASON? BLESSED IS THAT SERVANT WHOM HIS LORD, WHEN HE COMETH, SHALL FIND SO DOING. VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT HE SHALL MAKE HIM RULER OVER ALL HIS GOODS," ETC. ETC.—MATT. XXIV. 36–47.

"AND TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, LEST AT ANY TIME YOUR HEARTS BE OVERCHARGED WITH SURFEITING, AND DRUNKENNESS, AND CARES OF THIS LIFE, AND SO THAT DAY COME UPON YOU UNAWARES. FOR AS A SNARE SHALL IT COME ON ALL THEM THAT DWELL ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH. WATCH YE THEREFORE, AND PRAY ALWAYS, THAT YE MAY BE ACCOUNTED WORTHY TO ESCAPE ALL THESE THINGS THAT SHALL COME TO PASS, AND TO STAND BEFORE THE SON OF MAN. AND IN THE DAY TIME HE WAS TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE; AND AT NIGHT HE WENT OUT, AND ABODE IN THE MOUNT THAT IS CALLED THE MOUNT OF OLIVES." —LUKE XXI. 34–37; MARK XIII. 32–37.

THE SECOND COMING IN GLORY.

WE have found in the preceding chapter, that the previous part of this remarkable discourse of Jesus, (so specially interweaved with the memories of the MOUNT OF OLIVES,) is occupied with a graphic description of His coming in judgment, at the destruction of Jerusalem. But the local and historical coming is typical and suggestive of one far mightier. The Divine Saviour passes from a solitary event in earth's history, which concerned one generation alone, to the culminating glories of that Day, when "before Him shall be gathered all nations;" when "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds; from one end of heaven to the other!" The subject is one far too wide for the brief consideration our space can afford. We must restrict ourselves to the gleaning of a few of the more prominent truths bearing upon it, to be gathered from the Gospel of St Matthew, with any additional light imparted by the other synoptical narratives.

We are here informed, that the TIME *of the Saviour's advent is involved in secrecy.* There have always been, and doubtless there will always be, soothsayers in the Church—would-be prophets, who will venture to map out God's future, and to give day and date for the occurrence of unfulfilled pre-

dictions;—their successive failures only rebuking their presumption for diving into those "secret things which belong to the Lord our God." We know that there are not a few also, who, in no spirit of presumption, but in honest faith and holy hope, are living in the prospect of the Redeemer's speedy coming—who have their finger even now confidently pointing to the roll of fast-completing prophecy—who have placed their ear to the earth, straining to catch the sound of the wheels of Messiah's chariot. But the hour—the season of the Advent—is here pronounced, by lips from which there can be no appeal, to be beyond the ken of man. Even the angels—the heavenly "watchers" of Daniel—are involved in the same ignorance: "they cannot read the writing nor the interpretation thereof." "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only," (ver. 24.)

We have next, *a preliminary sign of the advent:—one of the events which are to antecede and anticipate it.* The Great Master—the Omniscient Saviour—utters the following brief but significant parable, (ver. 32,) "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." These words seem, from their connexion in this passage, to refer to the Jewish nation. Several commentators suggest that they contain a natural reference to the fig-tree which our Lord cursed on the way to Bethany.* The latter, as we found, was a striking type of Israel,

* Stier, Ebrard, &c.

by national grief and apostasy reduced to the condition of a fruitless, leafless cumberer. The naked skeleton, indeed, with stem and branches, has subsisted for eighteen hundred years: but its spiritual as well as its political glory is gone; the people dwelling, but dwelling isolated and alone, "not reckoned among the nations!" The Great Husbandman, after coming often and again seeking fruit and finding none, pronounced the dooming sentence;—"Immediately the fig-tree withered away." But is that withering to be for ever? Is that curse final, irremediable? Is the blighted tree "twice dead, plucked up by the roots?" "Son of man," are these stripped boughs and branches not yet "to live?" "Learn," —says those very lips that gave utterance to the retributive sentence,—"learn a parable of that fig-tree." 'Ere I come again,—ere my feet shall stand once more on this MOUNT OF OLIVES, that withered skeleton shall effloresce in luxuriance and beauty: every decayed stem and twig shall break forth in verdant leaves, and cluster thick with luscious fruit.'

In the state and condition of the Jewish people at the present day, we cannot read this parable yet. We can see no symptoms yet of the green leaf. We see the prophet's bones in the valley. But "lo! they are very many, and very dry." We gaze on that skeleton fig-tree: it still retains its place,—a marvellous, separate, and distinct existence,—but there are no spring or summer tints on the yet bare branches. Israel is yet ungathered, her blindness is still unremoved. We cannot look for the Lord's coming, until we see these promised pioneers of His advent;—until we see the now dispersed and scattered children of Abraham, alike by their

national return to the land of their fathers, and by their national recognition of Him whom their fathers crucified, "preparing the way of the Lord and making straight in the desert an highway for our God." It is manifest from this, and from manifold other passages, that the Jews are to have an all-important part in the evolution of the great drama of the future. When we begin to see the revivifying of that wintry fig-tree; when we see these scattered thousands flying "as doves to their windows," those who have for eighteen hundred years "lien among the pots," now with "their wings covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold,"—then, but not till then, shall we feel that we are on the eve of great events, when, either in Person or in power, the Lord shall come, and when the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the heavens.*

* "With God," indeed, "all things are possible." And (speaking of the political restoration and settlement of the Jews in Palestine) among these possibilities, doubtless, is that of the Scripture words receiving a literal and miraculous fulfilment, "A nation shall be born in a day," (Isa. lxvi. 8.) But we have no reason to suppose that there will be a departure, in this case, from the wonted gradual and progressive method of the Divine providential dealings, as seen in the analogy of nature, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The first condition of such a restoration seems, at this moment, awanting: no herald-voice has yet been heard amid these solitudes, proclaiming, even in the primary, literal sense of the words,—"Prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; *gather out the stones*, (Isa. lxii. 10.) I speak of this as illustrating the absence of the primary element of returning civilisation—that even "the *ways* of Zion do mourn," (Lam. i. 4.) There are horse and camel tracks, but not one '*road*' throughout all Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba. The one only symbol of modern progress, is the establishment of telegraph communication between Jaffa and Jerusalem. Indeed, no one who has recently been in the Holy Land, who has traversed its dreary wastes, its stony, barren, blighted valleys, and noted, above all, its utter moral degradation, can fail being struck with the absence, at this hour, of any "sign" of a speedy, political, social, or spiritual regeneration.

Yet, notwithstanding what we have now advanced, we cannot—we dare not—denude the words of Christ, of their significance and meaning, that *that day of the Lord will come suddenly, unexpectedly.* We are to allow no interpretation of prophecy to rob us of the solemn lesson these words convey. As Noah's contemporaries laughed to scorn the superstitious fears and forebodings of the solitary "preacher of Righteousness;" —as they doubtless denounced him as a poor dreamer, a fanatic alarmist, when they saw him day by day plying his hammer in constructing the rude ark of safety from the impending flood:—So is it now, and so will it be, when the Lord comes. Men will not credit the solemn monition. We may, as the Lord's ambassadors, proclaim the august reality; but they will point to the sequences of nature,—to the unvarying succession of the seasons—to the blue sky above, and the green fields below,—and say of the credulous preacher and his theme, as was said of the Old Testament prophet when he was counted nothing better than a raving enthusiast, "Ah, Lord God! doth he not speak parables?" Come when the advent hour may, it will come at unawares. When the world is absorbed as ever in its business, its pleasures, its gains, its traffic, its money-making. When life is going on in its wonted unvarying round. When, with some, the feast is spread—and the lights of luxury and gaiety are burning: when, with others, it is the dim lamp of sickness, or the hushed chamber of death. When, with some, the marriage-bell will be ringing;—with others, the funeral bell will be tolling. When all classes—ay, even many of God's own people are lulled in a blind

security. When farmer and merchant, and lawyer and trader are saying—"Peace and safety:" sudden destruction will "come." In the parallel passage in St Luke, that day is said to come "as a snare." It is the homely figure of an animal, prowling in the woods in search of prey, in a moment entrapped in the concealed and unexpected snare. Or in ver. 43, it is said to overtake "as a thief:" like a lurking assassin entering the dwelling at such a time as the goodman of the house was off his guard; when he had retired to rest,—when he has barred his windows, bolted his door, seen his children hushed in slumber, and the curtain of silence drawn around his dwelling;—then (when all is apparently secure) the prowling midnight thief steals stealthily within—"So *shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*" Or, "as the lightning lightneth from one part of heaven to another;"—as in these Eastern countries, the azure blue of the sky is often, in a few moments, overcast with black clouds, and the volleyed-lightning leaps from one end of the firmament to the other, bursting over the head of the unsheltered traveller—"So *shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*" Oh, what a motive is this combined *certainty* and *suddenness* of our Lord's advent, for habitual watching! What a quickening, stimulating incentive, for being ever ready; that that day may not overtake *us* as a thief!

Another truth here brought before us is, that the day of the Saviour's second coming *will be a day of complete and final separations.* Ver. 40, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall

be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." The godly are, to the last, to be associated in life's duties and avocations with the ungodly,—the children of light with the children of darkness; they meet in the same street; they transact business in the same mart and exchange; they sit together in the same office; they stand together behind the same counter: Even in the same family are those forced to commingle, who are in heart and spirit dissimilar and uncongenial. But, on *that* Day, these conventional fellowships of earth will be suddenly arrested and severed. Those who have worked together, and gained together, and lived together, and wept together, shall have then the brand put upon them of eternal separation. Their partnership shall for ever end: "the one shall be taken and the other left." The now commingling tares and wheat will be discriminated, and bound up in separate bundles. Yes; in *bundles*. Like will draw to like. There will be happy assimilations in the family of the righteous; there will be fearful assimilations in the family of the unrighteous. Now, mankind (the righteous and the wicked—the pure ore and the dross) are mingled in one promiscuous heap. But the moral magnet of holiness will then attract together the holy; while, with a negative power, it will repel the unholy:—He that is unjust will be unjust still; and he that is righteous will be righteous still. Oh, most solemn and searching thought—for those who have associated together for a lifetime on earth, then to bid each other a final and everlasting farewell! It is sad enough to have blanks in the family circle here. God keep us from having these blanks perpetuated and sterotyped through eternity!

Let us learn as another lesson, That *the prospect of Christ's coming, need not interfere with the prosecution of the ordinary duties and engagements of life.* God's elect — His waiting people — are represented to us, in this parable-picture, as busied in the commonest worldly avocations; some, engaged working in the field, others, grinding at the mill. We find from St Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians, that many members of that Church, even in this early era, were in a state of feverish excitement, under the impression that the second advent was imminent. They lost interest in all worldly matters. They abandoned life's duties,—surrendered themselves to an existence of idle contemplation: they lived in a religious dream-land, and unfitted themselves for the discharge of their ordinary occupations. Paul rebuked them for being thus unnecessarily "shaken in mind and troubled, as though the day of Christ were at hand," and declared, that if any would not work neither should he eat. Religion need not, and ought not, to interfere with diligence in business. When our Lord comes, we need be no better employed than in the prosecution of life's lawful labours. The Christian existence is not one of dreamy and sentimental isolation, implying a divorce from the activities of the world. The great and difficult problem is, to be *in* the world and yet not *of* it. To be, when that advent hour shall arrive, working in the field, or grinding at the mill; and yet, even in the midst of these coarse and common duties to have the advent spirit— the spirit of preparedness to lay down spade, or sieve, or ploughshare; housework, or fieldwork; or, it may be, pen

and ledger; and to say — "I am ready! Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

Finally, Let us advert to our Lord's own direct practical question, ver. 45—"WHO *then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household?*" He asks WHO? "who is this?" that each one of us, when we gaze upon the picture which he draws of the faithful and wise servant, may put the home question—'Does this answer *my* case?' "Lord, is it I?" *

In the parallel passage in St Mark, "The Son of man" is represented as one taking a far journey, who left his house and "gave authority to his servants, and *to every man his work.*" Would that we could realise and act upon this great fact—that to "*every man*" there is given a "*work.*" That it is not to ministers in their official capacity—but to each member of the Christian priesthood,—to each member of the Christian body-politic, Christ has assigned *some* business, *some* duty, *some* WORK in His kingdom. It is to be feared, that in these our times, Religion is made very much a matter of Sundays and of churches—culpably wrenched from the duties of daily life. A man thinks he has done well if he goes once a week to the house of God, and has his children baptized, and partakes, it may be, of the holy communion. But if asked what *work* he has done for Christ,—what cup of water he ever carried to the sufferer in Christ's name,—what word he ever spoke in rebuking evil and in defending righteousness, — what real genuine or downright interest he is taking in Christ's cause at home

* See Stier, *in loco*.

and abroad:—in one word, what niche he is filling in the spiritual temple?—he would either affect to misunderstand you, or he would have the honesty to say boldly out—'I am to be responsible for no such work. Anything of the kind, I shall do by proxy, but not by personal effort. My religion is the religion which begins the week and no more. I do not pretend, and never will, to take it with me *through* the week. Religion is religion, and business is business, let each of them retain their own place.'

That is *not* what Jesus means by giving "to *every* man his work." We know what this is in worldly things. We know what that wondrous secret in our country's mechanical and industrial prosperity is, *the division of labour*. Even in the same manufactory, you have men set apart for special departments of handicraft; and the one would make a sorry business of his neighbour's. The carpenter would blunder at the anvil; and the blacksmith would make clumsy work with the plane. Still more so is this the case in the varied educated professions. How strangely would the merchant act the physician's part at the sick-bed. How out of place the lawyer would feel in the engineer's factory, amid bolts and rivets, wheels and pistons. How ill at ease would the man of letters be, in plying the hammer of the son of toil; or the brawny arm of the artizan in preparing sheets to feed the printing-press. The beautiful arrangement, with regard to all these, is that stated by Divine lips—that there is "*to every man his work.*" And it is the same in the Church of Christ. We, who are the professing members of that Church—who have, by His own appointed sacramental rite, solemnly bound ourselves over to His service, we have

a work to do for Him:—not only a creed to believe—doctrines to subscribe — a denominational sect to uphold—but a *work* to *do*:—something that will redound to His glory, benefit our fellow-men, promote His cause and hasten His kingdom; something that will *prove* our love to Himself, not by words but by deeds—a living faith demonstrated by *works*, in our families, in our neighbourhoods; by kindness to the poor; by sympathy with the afflicted; helping a needy charity—aiding a crippled missionary cause; glad, when doors of usefulness are plainly opened, to be ready with the approving smile and the open hand. Oh, anything better than "the men of Meroz!"—the "do-nothings"—the men who ignore *all* work, and all personal responsibility;—the pages of whose history, so far as God and heaven are concerned, are one mournful blank: trees in the vineyard, but only cumberers,—darkening, with their unproductive boughs, the ground which other fruit-bearers would have occupied, screening from others the glory of the sunlight. It is no apology, but a sad aggravation, that they *know* their duty,—that "they know their Master's will and do it not." If ye *know* these things, happy only are ye if ye "DO them."

Ponder the solemn closing sentences in this chapter of St Matthew; peruse them without note or comment. Ver. 48—"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the

hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." These are searching words. Let none put them aside, saying—'They concern not me! I am at least a professing Christian!' So also was this evil, forgetful, neglectful steward of his lord's goods. He is called "a *servant*,"—"that evil *servant*." Outwardly he is a servant of Christ. He calls Christ "My Lord"—"My Lord delayeth his coming." He does not even doubt or deny the coming of his Lord, as the scoffers do. He only says, that coming is *delayed*. But, alas! he guiltily presumes on that delay. His presumption makes him careless and godless. He soon comes to assimilate with the world's maxims, and to be conformed to its guilty practices. And see his end! He has his portion with the hypocrites, where "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." What a solemn call to write '*Beware*' on the "evil *heart* of unbelief." For observe (ver. 48,) that evil servant began "saying *in his heart*." The heart began to entertain presumptuous, careless, and 'unfaithful' thoughts; and see how rapidly these germinated into sadder deeds. It was a downward course, as all sin is. The servant—the man who called Christ 'Lord'—ends in degraded worldliness—in the indulgence of base, earthly passion. He smites his fellow-servants; he eats and drinks with the drunken; those who are carnally secure—steeped in forgetfulness and indifference and sloth.

Nor are the very best of Christ's people beyond the need and necessity of such warnings and expostulations. The adorable Redeemer, while uttering these words to ALL indiscriminately and for the benefit of every age, had, as His immediate auditors now surrounding Him on the Mount

of Olives, His own disciples. These He had specially in His eye, when He said, in the parallel passage of St Luke, —"Take heed to YOURSELVES, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Truly, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

In St Mark, there are three monosyllables brought into significant juxtaposition. They may well form the three significant watchwords of the Christian life—"WATCH," "PRAY," "WORK." The combination of watchfulness and working with prayer, is the composite of the true life of faith. "Pray always," it is said in the parallel chapter of Luke;—that is, be ever in the spirit of prayer, and you will be in the spirit of readiness for your Lord's coming. Live like watchmen too. Get up often on the watchtower, looking wistfully along the highway, to see if you can catch your Master's projected shadow. Oh what a preservative against temptation and 'the snares of the world,' to live habitually under the thought—"My Lord may come to-morrow!"

And whatever be our thoughts about His second advent, all we have said is, at all events, true with reference to *death*. By sudden and unlooked-for bereavements—the midnight summons to the eternal world, given sometimes in the twinkling of an eye, and without a note of warning—He is ever and anon sounding in our ears the solemn monition—"At such a time as ye think not." Would that we might habitually live, as if our Lord could thus come at any time—this year—next week—to-day! Acting like faithful servants, who know their Master is on a journey

—expecting Him back, they know not how soon: He may tarry for years, or they may be roused from sleep by His coming at that midnight hour: yet having the house ever swept and garnished, ready for His welcome—"Blessed," thrice blessed, "is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Above all, seek, as members of separate families on earth—as those who love earth's consecrated ties,—to be so living, that these may be but a foreshadow and prefiguring of deathless friendships in a land where separation is unknown: that when Christ comes, or when death, His messenger, comes, it may not prove the dark precursor of eternal severance—the workers at the field and at the mill finally separated—the joyous glances at the hearths and homes of human love to be exchanged no more for ever; but rather, the blessed and welcome signal for everlasting reunion with those who are waiting to welcome you—

Saints in glory perfect made,
Wait thy passage through the shade;
Ardent for thy coming o'er,
See they throng the blissful shore!

XIV.

Parables of the Mount.

The Ten Virgins.

"THEN SHALL THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BE LIKENED UNTO TEN VIRGINS, WHICH TOOK THEIR LAMPS, AND WENT FORTH TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM. AND FIVE OF THEM WERE WISE, AND FIVE WERE FOOLISH. THEY THAT WERE FOOLISH TOOK THEIR LAMPS, AND TOOK NO OIL WITH THEM: BUT THE WISE TOOK OIL IN THEIR VESSELS WITH THEIR LAMPS. WHILE THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED, THEY ALL SLUMBERED AND SLEPT. AND AT MIDNIGHT THERE WAS A CRY MADE, BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM COMETH; GO YE OUT TO MEET HIM. THEN ALL THOSE VIRGINS AROSE, AND TRIMMED THEIR LAMPS. AND THE FOOLISH SAID UNTO THE WISE, GIVE US OF YOUR OIL; FOR OUR LAMPS ARE GONE OUT. BUT THE WISE ANSWERED, SAYING, NOT SO; LEST THERE BE NOT ENOUGH FOR US AND YOU: BUT GO YE RATHER TO THEM THAT SELL, AND BUY FOR YOURSELVES. AND WHILE THEY WENT TO BUY, THE BRIDEGROOM CAME; AND THEY THAT WERE READY WENT IN WITH HIM TO THE MARRIAGE: AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT. AFTERWARD CAME ALSO THE OTHER VIRGINS, SAYING, LORD, LORD, OPEN TO US. BUT HE ANSWERED AND SAID, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, I KNOW YOU NOT. WATCH THEREFORE, FOR YE KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR WHEREIN THE SON OF MAN COMETH."—MATT. XXV. 1–13.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

JESUS is still seated on 'the Mount,' "over against the Temple," surrounded by the chosen few, to whom He had just been unfolding, in prophetic discourse, the deeper mysteries of the kingdom. He proceeds, through His favourite medium of parable, to graft on these remarkable predictions of His 'coming,' farther teachings on the same transcendent topics.

Two of these new memories of OLIVET, will in this, and the following chapter, engage our thoughts.

The evening shadows have fallen over Jerusalem;—the sun has set behind the mountains of Bether: the gates are shut; and the sound of the footfall of the passers-by is diminishing in the darkened streets. While the curtain of night has thus been drawn around other homes of the city, one of these is illuminated for a festive occasion. Lights are seen gleaming through the latticed windows, and an expectant crowd indicate that a marriage procession is momentarily expected. The Jewish nuptials, as in many parts of the East to this day, were celebrated in the evening—generally after sunset. In accordance too with Hebrew wont, the Bridegroom, with "the children of the Bridechamber"—his own special friends—(Matt. ix. 15), has gone to fetch

home his affianced bride. By torchlight—amid the flare of flambeaux—he will conduct her along these streets from her Father's House to his own, where a banquet is prepared for the invited guests. Nigh to the Bride's home, lingering not far from the doorway, are seen ten young women in white festal attire. The number ten was sacred among the Jews. Ten bridesmaids was the usual number at the marriage festivities,—ten persons was the number which constituted "a family" for the celebration of the passover feast,—ten were required before a synagogue could be built. Each of these bridal attendants has a lamp in her hand, and a small flagon or vessel of oil is slung at her side. Their lamps are lit. They have been waiting—moment after moment, hour after hour, for the coming of the Bridegroom,—their eyes wistfully turned towards the house whither he has gone, eager to catch the first gleam of light issuing from the vestibule betokening his approach. Some unforeseen reason has occasioned delay. Wearied with excitement and the fatigue of the long and unexpected vigil, these vestal watchers have, one after another, dropped asleep, their lamps left to burn as they may. Several hours have passed. At last, midnight arrives; and in that silent season the sleepers are startled with the cry from the lips of some herald or messenger, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" All at once, the sealed eyes are opened;—drowsiness and slumber are exchanged for life and activity. The ten virgins have sprung to their feet;—the procession which they have been waiting to join, is close at hand, with its waving torches and loud joyous music, "the voice of the Bridegroom, and the voice of the Bride," (Jer. vii. 34.) The Bridegroom is walking by the palanquin, in which,

under silken canopy, is seated his Bride veiled in white, decked with ornaments flashing in the torchlight—bracelets upon her hands and a chain on her neck—a jewel on her forehead, ear-rings in her ears, and a beautiful wreath or garland upon her head, (Ezek. xvi. 11, 12.) Instinctively, the maiden watchers seize their lamps and commence to trim them. Five of these watchers have been wise and provident. They have their flagons filled with oil, anticipating the contingency of delay in the return of the Bridegroom. From these flagons their lamps are refilled and replenished, and the decaying flame burns with renewed lustre. The other five have not been thus foreseeing. They had made no provision for such an emergency as postponement till the midnight-watch. When they awoke refreshed from slumber, it was only to discover, when too late, that their lamps had either gone out or were fast expiring; and when they looked to their oil-flagons, with dismay they made the discovery that they were empty and unplenished. What was to be done? Their first impulse was to make application to their more fortunate companions—"Give us of your oil." But these latter had no superfluous supply. To wise forethought, they had added wise economy. They had only enough for their own use; they had made no provision to supplement a neighbour's shortcomings. One alternative only remained, —to go to the adjoining street to the shop or store of the oil-seller; and though the likelihood would be, at that untimely hour, that his store was closed and he himself in bed, it was their one chance, and they risked it. Meanwhile, the procession has come up; it is joined by the five wise with their retrimmed lamps. They proceed to the home of the

Bridegroom. Soon the darkness is left behind—the bridal train have entered within—the door is shut.

By and by, quick footsteps are heard approaching. It is the five improvident watchers, hastening also to the banquet-hall. They knock; but an unexpected negative is returned. Bitter are their reproaches, when they see the lights of festive joy gleaming through the windows, and hear the sound of minstrel music, while they themselves are left standing in the vacant street amid the blackness of night.*

* As it is generally supposed that the similitudes employed in several other parables—such as that of the Sower, the Shepherd, the Vine, &c.—were suggested by the outer scenes and objects themselves, as they passed before the eye of the Divine Redeemer,—may not a similar conjecture be warranted regarding the present:—the more so, as it was just the hour (sunset) when the Virgin Lamp-bearers would be seen assembling for their vigils? But if not at that moment, He who "sanctified and adorned with His presence" the marriage-feast in "His beginning of miracles in Cana of Galilee," must, at all events, not have been unfamiliar with the spectacle which His own parable so graphically describes. Crossing at nightfall by the upper and most frequented road to Bethany, He would not unfrequently see, in looking down, (as He could there do,) into the very streets of the city beneath, the white groups and the flare of their torches; or in those lonely hours we have already described, spent in devotion on the Mount, the festal music of the bridal procession must have been often and again borne to His ear: above all, in the stillness of that midnight air, the sharp shrill cry of the herald, with the announcement of the Bridegroom's approach.

Dr Kitto, among several interesting illustrations he has collected of this and other Scripture references to the marriage ceremony among Easterns, quotes the following from *Ward's View of the Hindoos*, although it relates rather to the coming of the Bridegroom to the home of his bride. 'At a marriage, the procession of which I saw some years ago, the Bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride arrived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced, as in the very words of Scripture, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession. *Some of them had lost their lights*

Such is the outer framework of the spiritual picture contained in this most impressive 'OLIVET memory.' Jesus, the Divine Bridegroom, repeats in parabolic form, the same great truth He had recently prophetically proclaimed on the Mount, that He is coming a second time, to conduct His affianced Bride in triumph to His Heavenly Home—that Bride constituting the entire Church in every age of the world, and which He has betrothed to Himself for ever. The Church on earth—the visible Church, composed of wise and foolish, is symbolised by the ten virgins who are represented —some prepared, others not prepared—some ready, others unready, to follow the glorious procession into the eternal banqueting hall.

Without entering minutely into the interpretation of the Parable, or straining unnecessarily the application of its several parts, let us gather from it a few practical truths; starting with the great lesson which it would seem again to be the special design of the Divine Speaker, as in the dis-

and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them; and the cavalcade moved on to the house of the bride, at which place the company entered a large and splendidly illuminated area before the house, covered with an awning, where a great multitude of friends dressed in their best apparel were seated upon mats. . . . The Bridegroom then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut and guarded by Sepoys. I and others expostulated with the doorkeepers, but in vain. Never was I so struck with our Lord's beautiful parable as at this moment, "*and the door was shut.*"'

The only marriage procession I saw in Palestine was at Hebron, but I was too fatigued at the time to get other than a distant view of it. There was the ordinary accompaniment, however, of torches and music, and of the former a considerable number. These, blending with the light of a full moon, just rising above the old mosque of the patriarchs, rendered the scene a picturesque one.

course which preceded it, to inculcate,—viz., *the necessity of watchfulness in the prospect of His coming.*

There is one utterance, indeed, in the Parable, which seems at first sight rather to neutralise the power and efficacy of this lesson—the clause where the Bridegroom is spoken of as "*tarrying;*"—"*while the Bridegroom tarried.*" This was doubtless intended by Jesus, to be a word of guidance as well as comfort to His Church in the long ages that were to intervene before His second advent. The Christians of the early centuries—indeed of the apostolic age, as we have recently had occasion to observe—had indulged in erroneous expectations as to the imminence of His coming. He did nothing expressly to extinguish the hope, or to weaken the motive to holiness of heart and life therein supplied. He knew how salutary the expectation, thus habitually and solemnly cherished, would prove. But He here, by parable, drops the significant hint, which we now can understand and appreciate, that the Church need not be surprised though centuries should elapse ere the advent hour strike—that she must not despond at the long tarrying of the chariot-wheels of this true Sisera, or utter the despairing plaint as she looks vainly through the lattice, "Why is His chariot so long in coming —why tarry the wheels of His chariot?"

In no respect, however, was this uncertainty—or this probable postponement of His Advent, to diminish the need of habitual watchfulness,—leading to any relaxation of vigilance in respect to the plenishing of the oil-flagons or the trimming of the lamps. "Wateh therefore," says He, "for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh," (ver. 13.) He renews the prophetical warning given in the

preceding chapter, that it will be "*at midnight*"—the time He is least looked for—the cry will be heard, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." How striking and impressive is this frequent reiteration of the same truth from the lips of the Son of God! If we had some very special injunction oft-times repeated by the lips of a beloved earthly friend;—if there were some one utterance more than another associated with the last days or hours of a revered parent, with what hallowed fondness would we cling to it and cherish it: how it would ring its echoes in our ear, and stir to its depths our heart of hearts! What friend had we ever like Him, who hath so often and so solemnly said to us, "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch," (Mark xiii. 35–37.)

A special monitory word in this Parable, is surely addressed to the *ungodly*. Observe, we have here set forth, in strong and impressive colouring, the eternal detriment and loss resulting, not to the impious and profane, but to improvident and unwatchful professors; those who had a fair exterior—who were attired in the same festal dress as the wise virgins—who had the same lamps in their hands—who had gone forth professedly to meet Christ—who called Him "Lord, Lord;" and yet, with all this apparent resemblance and identity, who were disowned at last by the Divine Bridegroom. In the case of the foolish virgins moreover, it was disownment at a season when, above all others, we would have naturally looked for the manifes-

tation of mercy, if this had been compatible with the principles of rectitude and justice. The Bridegroom had come to fetch home his Bride. It was "the day of espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart." On earth, and in the case of earthly kings, it is the bridal or coronation day which is the day of reprieve and amnesty,—when the prison-doors are thrown open, and liberal things are devised and done. But observe, when these importuning virgins are repulsed with the withering words, "I know you not," it is at the very hour when the Heavenly Bridegroom and enthroned King would be expected to be thus lavish in his benefactions;—when, joyous Himself, every other thought would be excluded from His heart but kindness for others,—when the joy, deepest in the great Centre, might be expected to send its concentric waves out to the very circumference of being, setting even the lost and stranded vessel floating on its waters. Yet, even at this time, when if Mercy could stretch forth her golden sceptre, it would be done,—come and hear the solemn assertion—"*and the door was shut!*" What, then, will be the doom of the obdurate sinner, the openly profane, the stout-hearted scorner of Divine love? "If these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" "If the righteous scarcely be saved, *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*"

Ye who are now all apathetic and unconcerned, the day is coming when you will be startled from this atheist dream, and when you will be driven to entertain those momentous questions you are at present evading and professing to despise. "Fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites." "*Then* ALL arose and trimmed their lamps."

Blessed be God, the Bridegroom *tarries.* "While he *tarried!*" What comfort is in these words, for those who have for the first time woke up to a sense of their guilt and danger. He still *tarries!* The wickedness of the world, rising every day before His throne, might well quicken His advent-steps to consume it with the breath of His mouth, and destroy it with the brightness of His coming. But see His forbearance: *He tarries!* For all this His anger *is* turned away, and His hand of patience and mercy is stretched out still: He is not willing that any should perish. He *tarries!* but presume not on His forbearance. "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will *not* tarry!" I repeat the remark we had occasion to make in connexion with the same subject in the preceding chapter: remember, if the advent of the Lord be itself distant,—though ages should elapse before the final trump be heard,—there is another advent that cannot, with any of us, be very far off. As it has been well observed, "There is a relative nearness of all of us to the time of Christ's second coming in judgment. There is an absolute nearness of all of us to Christ's second coming at death." It matters not whether it be the archangel's trumpet or our own funeral bell: either will, to us, really sound the same summons, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." Be not among the presumptuous number who are lulling themselves into a yet deeper sleep by the cry, '"My Lord delayeth His coming." Death may come to other doors, but not to mine. No furrow is on my cheek, no dimness in my eye. Other gnarled trees in the forest may tremble at the sound of the woodman's axe, or succumb to the winter storm; but my roots are moored firm and fast; I am strong as an oak

of Bashan. Others may do well to prepare for the midnight cry, by trimming their lamps and plenishing their empty vessels; but there is no such urgency in my case. I have time enough before I die.'

Another hour, eternity may be at the door, the Bridegroom at hand, the gates of mercy closed for ever! You may affect indifference to the concerns of your souls now, but it will be an awful reality *then*. You may mock at prayer now, but it will be, with no sembled anxiety, that the cry will ascend from your lips *then*, "Lord, Lord, open!" Yes, all will be in earnest *then*, when a gloomier than Hezekiah's messenger will come with the startling mandate, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." That old man grown gray in the service of sin—the lamp of salvation left untrimmed for a whole existence — will be in earnest *then*. That selfish worldling, whose life was a fevered scramble in the race for riches, will be in earnest about the true riches *then*. That votary of pleasure, who bartered all that was great, and lovely, and generous, and good, for the flippant superficial gaieties of a vain world, will be in earnest *then*. Oh, neglectful one, prepare to meet thy God! Rouse thee from thy guilty lethargy; go in the gladdening sunlight, when the oil is not vended but gifted, when the flagon may be filled "without money and without price." "Give us of your oil" is the frantic cry of many a man on his death-bed —the unsuccoured wail and appeal of desperation to the anguished relatives standing around. But another Bible saying has, at that solemn hour, a new and awful truthfulness imparted to it: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother," (Ps. xlix. 7.) This parable, indeed, forms another

of the reiterated calls of Christ, which we have had again and again to note in these *Olivet* memories, to beware of forfeiting present opportunities;—leaving the concerns of the soul to hinge on the risk of a peradventure; toiling on, the livelong day, at the world's mill, making sure of the world's promised "penny" to its fagging labourers—but oh, at what a peril and cost of bankruptcy has that penny been earned! The world has been true to its promised wages; the stipulated recompense is paid: but at what a sacrifice of eternal peace and happiness! Jeopardise not your safety. It is a solemn thought surely to all, that every new week is bringing you nearer the midnight summons, "Go ye out to meet Him:" ay, and if unready, to find no place in the festal procession and festal hall,—to discover the closed door and the cheerless repulse! "Go" not only to-day, but "go and buy for yourselves." You cannot get from a brother or sister. There are no works of supererogation: "There is not enough for us and for you." "Why do they not cry to the Bridegroom," says Luther, "why do they run to men for oil?" But there is enough and to spare in that inexhaustible store garnered in Jesus. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

If there be a special word of warning to the sinner, there is a word, alike of exhortation and comfort to the godly—Christ's true people. Be *waiting*. This is the bridal attitude. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately,"

(Luke xii. 35, 36.) An apostle breathes the prayer, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient *waiting* for Christ." "Lo, this is our God, we have *waited* for him." No sooner were the Thessalonians brought under the regenerating power of divine grace, so as to "serve the living and true God," than it was further said of them, that they "*waited* for his Son from heaven," (1Thess. i. 10.) Beware of anything and everything that would defraud you of your full festal joy, and mar the prospect of that "blessed hope." Be sober, be vigilant; watch the first dimming of your lamps, the first shortcomings in prayer, the first symptoms of spiritual slumber, any defection and declension from your first love. Beware of resting content with the mere spasmodic religion of feeling and emotional impulse—a fitful intermittent flame: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." For this purpose, and above all, see to your store of oil. It was this which made the difference between the virgins of the parable. Oil is the Scripture symbol and emblem of the Holy Spirit. The wise virgins—the waiting ones, had their faith and love and patience fed and nourished by the indwelling and anointing of the Spirit of God. He is one of the two Olive-trees which distilled the golden oil into Zechariah's typical reservoir, (Zech. iv. 12.) By His gracious agency, the lamp is kept from flickering, faith from decaying, and believers are made to "shine as lights in the world." Readiness to meet the Lord, is not the gathering up of the wrecks of 'a worn and withered love' at the last—not the attempt to buy oil and to furbish the lamp, when the cry of the Bridegroom is heard, and the bridal procession is on its way to the festive hall. Life is the true pre-

paration for His coming. Indeed, in this view, we are partial to the interpretation given by some of the older divines to the sleep of the wise virgins. We may take, at all events, the alternative meaning, that it may have been intended, not to indicate a participation in the drowsiness and sloth of the foolish, but rather the calm sleep of the mind at peace with God—the soul soothed to tranquil repose, under the sublime consciousness that torch and flagon were all ready—the waiting, prepared Christian, having nothing to do but to die, and to wake up in glory everlasting. "*So giveth He his beloved* SLEEP;" or as we observe it beautifully expressed regarding the recent death of an eminent Eastern missionary, "Wearied in his toil, he lay down to rest, and the angels came and bore him away."* Happy those soldiers of the cross, who, feeling that they are all ready to meet the last enemy, can lay themselves down by the bivouac fire, and wait tranquilly the blast of the warning trumpet, or the voice of the sentinel summoning to the brief closing struggle. Happy they who are thus ready: thus ready, too, to meet their Lord in the midst of earth's employments;—ready, at any moment, to doff the soiled garments of a workday world, to be arrayed in Sabbatic attire—the hand begrimed with earthly toil, ready, at any moment, to take the palm,—the voice uplifted amid earth's busy industries, ready, at any moment, to take up "the new song." Yes, to be truly prepared, does not imply that you be, at the hour of the advent cry, busied in direct acts of religiousness,—called to meet God, as we have known some to be, in the very attitude of prayer, beckoned from

* Notice of the death of Dr Goodell in "Missions in Western Asia," June 1867.

their knees to the Bridegroom's presence,—prayer suddenly changed into praise,—one instant engaged in noble service for their Saviour on earth, the next, translated among ministering seraphim! Work, worldly work, must, in the case of God's people, be mingled with worship. The Christian may receive the final call, as we have already seen, when grinding at the mill, or plying the shuttle, or serving at the counter, or busied in the mart; or, like Hedley Vicars, when engaged in the midnight sally, or surrounded by the roar of battle. Many (indeed most) are arrested by the summons of death amid the commonplace drudgeries of the world, and not a few, in the twinkling of an eye, translated to the consecrated activities of the glorified. These five wise virgins, though the festal procession found them asleep, were nevertheless, 'ready'—their ordinary duties and business had not allowed them to neglect the bridal lamp, and the oil to trim it. Of each one of these it might be said, as of their sister at Bethany, when the words were addressed to her, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee;"—"as soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto Him." The readiness of a Christian to meet his Lord, is not the readiness mechanically attained by cloistered seclusion, 'bidding his work and his neighbour farewell,' but holiness of heart and consecration of the will and the affections to Christ. We repeat, this is the perfection of the saintly life—to have the lamp and the vessel so plenished beforehand, that death can never overtake too soon, or too suddenly. Sad only is the case of those, who have, for the first time, to seek a living Saviour in a dying hour—to go to the oil-vender in the blackness of the night of death, when the

store is locked up, the bridal procession has reached the festive hall, and the door is shut. Church of the living God! if thus ready, if thus "waiting for HIM," how glorious, how gladdening your prospects! In what an endearing attitude is He here brought before you as your heavenly Bridegroom! If even the Baptist, when that bright nuptial and coronation hour was yet in a far distant future—when the day was one of "darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains,"—if even he 'rejoiced greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice,'—if the children of the bridechamber, amid fasting and weeping, and the surroundings of humiliation and sorrow, had, in that lowly and despised Jesus of Nazareth, their "joy fulfilled,"—what will be the joy of that bridal day, when the cry will ascend from a triumphant Church, "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready,"—when the days of sadness and tears are ended for ever, and when "with gladness and rejoicing she shall be brought, and she shall enter into the king's palace"? The door of that banquet-hall, the door of your Father's house, will shut you in, and that too for ever, from the night of a dark world—from all temptation, all sin, all sorrow. No vacant seat, no absent guest, will be found there. What is life's best banquet often, but a scene of vanished mirth; the flowers which festooned the festive hall withered;—gaps found in the home circle; marred friendships; saddened memories coming forth like the writing of old, of a man's hand on the wall? The brightest nuptial procession on earth, must have, sooner or later, the inevitable sequel of widowhood; the weeds must, sooner or later, suc-

ceed the chaplet of white blossom; the funeral dirge drown the festive strain. Not so these espousals of the heavenly Bridegroom. These are ties which know no dissolution—"I will betroth thee unto me for ever." No shadow will ever darken that heavenly feast—no funeral dirge ever int rrupt the music. "Oh what a moment will that be," said a faithful watcher, who has now felt the reality of his words, "when the lamp of faith will be suddenly extinguished, not amidst the darkness of eternal night, but amid the splendours of everlasting day!" And, better than all, it v ill be to enjoy eternal fellowship with Jesus! At earth's mo t hallowed seasons of spiritual communion, such fellowship is fitful, intermittent, transient—the heavenly Bridegroom is seen "behind the lattice," or like "a stranger in the land, a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night;" but a glorious element in the bliss of the triumphant Church is thus specified in the parable: "they that were ready went in *with* HIM to the marriage." "With HIM." It is the presence of Christ which is to constitute the chief bliss in that eternal festival. The bridal dress, the music, the decorations, the provisions of the banqueting-hall are not mentioned. They are to be 'with HIM;' and that is the joy of their joy, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord;" "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb!"

"The watchers on the mountains
Proclaim the Bridegroom near;
Go meet Him as He cometh,
With hallelujahs clear.

The marriage feast is waiting,
The gates wide open stand;
Up! up! ye heirs of glory,
The Bridegroom is at hand!"

XV.

Parables of the Mount.

The Talents.

"FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AS A MAN TRAVELLING INTO A FAR COUNTRY, WHO CALLED HIS OWN SERVANTS, AND DELIVERED UNTO THEM HIS GOODS. AND UNTO ONE HE GAVE FIVE TALENTS, TO ANOTHER TWO, AND TO ANOTHER ONE; TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS SEVERAL ABILITY; AND STRAIGHTWAY TOOK HIS JOURNEY. THEN HE THAT HAD RECEIVED THE FIVE TALENTS WENT AND TRADED WITH THE SAME, AND MADE THEM OTHER FIVE TALENTS. AND LIKEWISE HE THAT HAD RECEIVED TWO, HE ALSO GAINED OTHER TWO. BUT HE THAT HAD RECEIVED ONE WENT AND DIGGED IN THE EARTH, AND HID HIS LORD'S MONEY. AFTER A LONG TIME THE LORD OF THOSE SERVANTS COMETH, AND RECKONETH WITH THEM. AND SO HE THAT HAD RECEIVED FIVE TALENTS CAME AND BROUGHT OTHER FIVE TALENTS, SAYING, LORD, THOU DELIVEREDST UNTO ME FIVE TALENTS: BEHOLD, I HAVE GAINED BESIDES THEM FIVE TALENTS MORE. HIS LORD SAID UNTO HIM, WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT: THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A FEW THINGS, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS: ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD. HE ALSO THAT HAD RECEIVED TWO TALENTS CAME AND SAID, LORD, THOU DELIVEREDST UNTO ME TWO TALENTS: BEHOLD, I HAVE GAINED TWO OTHER TALENTS BESIDES THEM. HIS LORD SAID UNTO HIM, WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT; THOU HAST BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A FEW THINGS, I WILL MAKE THEE RULER OVER MANY THINGS: ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."—MATT. XXV. 14-23.

THE TALENTS.

JESUS is still on the brow of OLIVET. It is 'toward evening, and the day is far spent,' when He utters the parable which is now to claim our attention—the last of the many spoken in the course of His public teaching. There was no single day, perhaps, in His previous ministry, into which so much was compressed as the present. Early in the morning, He had crossed the Mount to the courts of the Temple, there to encounter a succession of captious discussions,—"the strife of tongues:" to this had been added the delivery of the momentous prophetic discourse, with its accompanying exhortations, to His own disciples. As the Son of Man, "partaker of the human frame," He could not fail to be wearied alike in body and in spirit: and as the twilight was deepening around Him, (with Gethsemane in view—the anticipation of a gloomier, darker night at hand)—the feelings expressed on another occasion, could alone have led Him to task exhausted nature by prolonging these themes of prediction and warning, "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work." For the last time previous to His Passion, He was returning to Bethany. Ere He retraces that path, His eyes will have closed in death;—the event, waited for by all time, will have been consummated;—the redemption of the world completed.

Most of our recent commentators have correctly seized on the special distinctive lesson of this parable, and its relation to that of the Ten Virgins, which immediately precedes it. The great duty inculcated by the latter, is vigilant *waiting* for the coming of the Lord. The lesson of the present is the counterpart and complementary duty, of vigilant *working* in the prospect of that solemn event. It is indeed the union and combination of the two, which constitutes the ideal of the Christian character, 'the perfect man in Christ.' Not all waiting or contemplation;—not a life of quiet, prayerful meditative abstraction—the mere *subjective* of religion; nor yet all outward bustle and busy excitement, to the neglect of the cultivation of personal piety;—but the happy incorporation and blending of both, 'not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:'—the lamps of the soul trimmed —the oil of grace filling the flagons—every precaution used to prevent spiritual declension and "that day overtaking as a thief." At the same time, the earnest practical exemplification of the active virtues. In one word, to carry out and illustrate that simplest but most comprehensive definition of the Christian life and spirit—the *being* good and the *doing* good.

The sequence of the two parables is, in this respect, too, well worth noting.* The *subjective* must precede the *objective—waiting* before *working:*—the heart and affections must be right before God, ere there can be any honest or acceptable *outward* activities. What Paul said to Timothy, may be addressed to every member of the Church, "Take heed to thyself, and to the doctrine." 'Thyself' first, *then* to the

* See Trench and Alford, *in loco.*

ministry. Thyself first,—the trimming of the inner lamp —habitual readiness to obey the Bridegroom's call: *then*, the diligent prosecution of the activities of the Christian life. God can never accept the most splendid services, unless they be first consecrated by the surrender of the soul. Unless the root be holy, there can be no sound, no possible fruit. The great Apostle, in commending his Corinthian converts for their good deeds and Christian liberality, gives the secret of it in the emphatic words, "They first gave their own selves to the Lord."

The incidents and framework of the parable require no explanation. The Lord Jesus is Himself the Master, travelling to the far country, who, before leaving, summons his servants into his presence, entrusting them with his household property and the investment of his capital; and while the main or general lesson is an exhortation to diligence or activity, we shall find there is also a special truth interweaved and inculcated—viz., that the responsibility of each Christian is exactly commensurate with the amount of gifts, or graces, or talents received in trust from his absent Lord. All are to be workers; but on that worker rests the heaviest obligation whose means and opportunities and abilities are greatest. The Divine Redeemer had uttered, more than once, in the course of that memorable day, the midnight call. He enforces it by different, though certainly not conflicting considerations, in these twin parables; which, moreover, to complete the sequence, are appropriately followed by the magnificent representation of the general Judgment,—a meet peroration for these closing unrivalled utterances. There the Shepherd-Judge illustrates and enforces, by the

most sublime of all His descriptions, the great principle which is to regulate the proceedings of the last assize, "Justified by *faith*, judged by *works*."

But, not to anticipate, let a few thoughts be offered, on these two points—*the day of* TRUST, and *the day of* RECKONING.

I. *The day of Trust.*—This heavenly Master, in His contemplated absence, allocates a sum of money to each of His servants, "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey."

The first remark which presents itself is, — that *to all of us are committed some peculiar gifts or talents.* There is not the professing member of the Church of Christ who is not the possessor of some such trust, for which he is responsible to the almighty Donor, and which may be sanctified for the Master's use. A writer has noted, that the word "talented" has, with us, been diverted from its original meaning: it has come to be applied exclusively to a favoured class—those peering above their fellows in superior genius and mental endowments. Not so are the "talented" of this parable. They are God's whole family of responsible moral agents—from the lowliest and most obscure, to those in conspicuous positions in the Church and in the world. All, in a greater or less degree, are invested with the goods of heaven, either natural, moral, or spiritual; from the trust committed to the few—the talents of wealth, station, influence, intellect—to the talents belonging to the many —time, reason, unimpaired intellect, kindly sympathies

and affections, the blessings of civil and religious liberty, and the like. Oh, never make light of the smallest gift; never despise or repudiate the smallest moral, or intellectual, or spiritual capital. Has not many a man in our great mercantile communities, by diligent trading, not on talents, but on mites—not on pounds, but on pence and farthings, by God's blessing on unwearied diligence and successful investment, placed himself in opulence and splendour? And shall we *not* make light of small *natural* advantages, and yet trifle with our moral responsibilities—despise Heaven's "day of small things?"

Observe next—*The varied trusts are proportioned to our varied capabilities.* The master of the parable gave his servants "every man according to his several ability." God, in the dispensing of these sacred trusts, does not act capriciously; He distributes the talents according to the known powers and capacities of His servants: "to every man his work." He gives equitably, and He expects a corresponding return. Some, from peculiar outward circumstances—from their position in the Church and the world—will be able to invest a large capital, and draw in a large return: these are the five talented servants. Others move in a humbler and less influential sphere: they have only two talents, and from them, as the result of trading, their Lord expects no more. In either case, they have done their duty up to the measure of their responsibility; the amount entrusted to them has been doubled; and their fidelity being thus tested and proved, their Master is satisfied. The Church of Christ is made up of "vessels of large and small quantity;" but the Lord does not unreasonably expect the smaller vessel to hold

the contents of the large one. The Church is a garden adorned with trees and plants and flowers; but the Lord does not expect the hyssop to assume the dimensions of the cedar, nor the olive to attain the height of the stately palm, nor the myrtle to be laden with the fruit of the vine, nor the lily to waft the perfume of the rose. He does not expect the lowly unlettered Christian to fight like the champion of the faith. He does not expect from poverty the alms it has not to give, nor from the sick-bed sufferer the active energies which bodily prostration forbids. Let none needlessly mourn that they cannot glorify God by talents He never gave them, and for which therefore they are not responsible. Let none say, 'Had I been in another position in life, I might have invested a large capital for my Lord.' Though you are narrowed and restricted where you are to the one talent, use it well, and God will accept "according to what a man hath, not according to what he hath not." There is nothing more beautiful than this arrangement, alike in the Church and in the world, of "diversities of gifts," like stars of diverse magnitude among the heavenly bodies. And the desirable thing is, not to be aspiring after *great* things, in order to do *great* services; but to do our little work, to trade on our limited talent, our few pence, with a solemn sense of our responsibility for its right employment in the sight of God. I repeat, let no man despise the humblest moral or spiritual capital. The rill does not say, I need not pursue this narrow course because I am not a river. The grass or lichen do not say, We need not grow, because we are not forest trees. The lamp does not say, I need not shine, because I am not a star; nor the star, I need not shine, because

I am not a sun. The common soldier does not say, I need not gird me for the battle, for I am neither officer nor commander. No; alike in the natural, moral, and spiritual worlds, there is to everything, and every man, their own peculiar sphere and place and vocation; and God asks no more and no less, from the lowliest as well as the mightiest, than that they fulfil their appointed and prescribed destiny. The interest expected, will be in proportion to the amount of entrusted capital, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

A third remark suggested is, *that Christ has a right to our services.* The very name of *servant* involves the idea of hire, work, responsibility. And what (especially as professing Christians) is our relation to Him? We have become His servants by grace. It is not our own property we have entrusted to us for investment: had it been so, we might have exercised a discretionary power; we might have hoarded it or spent it as we listed. But the capital being His, we are responsible for its use or abuse. We shall be justly challenged and condemned for our unworthy stewardship, if this capital, with so many outlets for eligible investment, has been allowed to lie dormant in our coffers, or buried in the earth. He speaks, towards the close of the parable, of receiving (not ours) but "HIS OWN," with usury or interest.

Jesus has been delivering His goods, age after age, to His Church. One generation after another has been gathering up the hereditary trust; and now these talents, eighteen hundred years ago put into the hands of His apostles, have descended to us. Do we realise our true position as His

hired servants? He has paid us the wages of His own blood and sufferings to secure our willing servitude and obedience. Do we feel our responsibilities regarding the committed trust, whatever it be? Do we feel that all we have, is a loan from Him: that we are stewards of His grace, custodiers of the great Master's goods; and that the lowliest talent, the humblest service, may become a consecrated gift, if exercised and employed with the high end of doing our Master's bidding, and promoting His glory?

And let none rest in the mere complacent feeling of being possessed with talents, if they do not turn them to advantage for Him who bestowed them. There is often self-delusion in this. A man, for example, is conscious of being possessed of a generous heart, a love of doing kind things. He pities the poor niggard who, in his narrow soul, grudges the smallest pittance to the needy in a time of distress. But he is, nevertheless, contented himself with doing nothing. He reposes in the unctuous thought, that if opportunity offered, (which he imagines it has not,) he would be capable of rising to do some magnanimous deed; but, meanwhile, he folds his hands, and rests satisfied with the reflection, that he *feels* at least better than his mean-souled neighbour. Ah, he is the greater delinquent of the two! The man with the narrow mind is responsible for his niggardliness. But more responsible is he, whose soul has been filled by his Master with generous impulses and kindly affections, if he padlocks the door of his heart, and keeps the talents hoarded, wasting, rusting, unemployed, and unimproved. The mere *having* qualities and affections, instead of releasing us of obligation, only increases and intensifies our responsibility. The ques-

tion with us is not 'What *have* I of my Lord's!' but, 'What *do* I with what I have?'

Let us pass now to consider the second leading theme of the parable—*the day of* RECKONING.

Yes, of *reckoning;* for the minute and detailed account required and given of the talents used and abused, shows that there will be a personal dealing on the part of God with each individual. The doings and trusts of earth will not be jostled together in a general indiscriminate mass. The divine Master, in bestowing His rewards, will scrutinise the return of every talent; the great Shepherd will call, one by one, His own sheep by name, and "lead them out."

It is said in the parable that, "*after a long time,* the lord of these servants cometh and reckoneth with them." "*After a long time.*" In one sense it is a *short* time. To the Almighty Lord Himself, these few thousand years will be but as "one day;" and to His servants also, in comparison with that condition of infinite being on which they are about to enter, oh, how short! Yet, in another sense, to them it is "a *long time*" of solemn privilege and sacred trust. If our anxious, solemn moments, the crisis-hours of life—those seasons of deep suspense which all know from personal experience—if these always seem longest; well may the present probation period, to all Christ's servants,—to all immortal beings,—be a LONG time indeed! It is the season of infinite suspense on which hangs their weal or their woe for ever. It is the long momentous period, which will be regarded by them through an endless eternity, either

with feelings of adoring thankfulness and joy, or with the pang of unutterable despair.

But to proceed. The first thing to be noted with regard to this day of reckoning is, that as the rewards are received by the faithful servants, they appropriate no merit in the diligent trading to themselves, *they give their Lord all the glory.* "*Thou* deliverest to me," or, as it is expressed in the kindred parable in St Luke, "*Thy* pound." And when they speak of their gain, they take care to tell whence it emanated. No gain could there have been without the deposit—no interest without the principal. "I have gained beside them," (*i.e.*, along with them,—by their help.) They feel they have done no more than their duty. The capital was advanced by Him; and if they have traded on it successfully, He shall have all the glory of the return.

And yet observe, in conjunction with this, that though they owe all to the sovereign grace and mercy of Jesus; though, but for His generous benefaction—His advanced capital—they must have been bankrupts for eternity,—when He comes to confer the tokens of His approbation, *He rewards, as if the merit were their own.* He speaks to them in language of singular and encouraging approval, "Well done, good and faithful servant, *thou* hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." What blessed words, overflowing with comfort! The countenance of the Master, in uttering them, seems full of joy; as if it were a delight to Himself to shower upon them the infinite blessings of His love, and to recompense faithful service performed. If the architect has joy, in seeing the stately edifice he has

planned, reared by discerning and diligent workmen; if the teacher has joy, in seeing his laborious toils resulting in the intellectual distinctions and triumphs of his scholars; if the commander has joy, in seeing his brave men mounting the ramparts for the release of the beleaguered garrison, putting glad hope into countenances wan with despair and death;—what will be the joy of the great Lord on that Day, when called to distribute His own rewards to devoted love and earnest toil,—when on the faithful unto death He confers the crown of life? He celebrates His return with a festival of joy; He invites His redeemed to enter His own banqueting hall, there to receive His cheering commendation. In a nobler sense than the words bore when He uttered them on the eve of His humiliation on earth, will He say at that festal gathering, "Henceforth I call you not *servants*, but *friends*."

One other thought suggested in the parable regarding that day of reckoning, (to which, indeed, we have already referred, but which is here again brought before our notice,) is, that the approving sentence of the great Master is not grounded upon having *gained* many things, but on account of *fidelity* over a few things. "Well done," is the twice repeated encomium, "good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things."

Be not cast down or disappointed, because, as Christ's servants on earth, what you may have accomplished is small,—because the measure of your success has not been commensurate with your labour. It is not *results*, but *motives* He looks to. It is not the *successful* man, as has been well observed, whom He praises in the parable, but *the*

good and faithful one. Thanks be to God *fidelity*, not *success*, is to regulate the final reward given. If it were otherwise, how hardly would many a brave heart in the battle of life, fare at the Great Day. How many a noble, unselfish, kindly spirit, has on earth been baffled and buffeted, misapprehended and misrepresented; his best deeds turned into ridicule, his best efforts thwarted, his kindness requited with insult, his faithful warnings and admonitions scorned! How many a spiritual soldier has sunk broken-hearted into the tomb, conscious of not one successful result to his labours! How many a faithful missionary has had to return home from his field of self-sacrificing toil, with health ruined and energy prostrated; or, sadder still, has had to turn, after years of patient work, from a field that refused to yield fruit, and from degraded souls that would be caught neither by love nor by guile! But see, in this parable, how the sentence and utterance of the Master runs. It is not "Well done, good and *successful*," but "good and *faithful* servant." Oh, many an unrequited labourer, who had not so much as one sheaf gleaned on the earthly field, will doubtless, in that day of the world's great Harvest home, come again with rejoicing, bringing the sheaves of recompensed fidelity with him.

Reader, are you prepared for that season of solemn scrutiny? Make the most of your present fleeting hours of mercy and forbearance. We never know how long or how brief these may be. "Occupy," says Christ, "till I come." That coming, as we have seen in a previous chapter, is to all of us, practically, the day of our death; and who among us, with reference to that unknown hour, can measure the span

of that little word *till!* "Till:" it may be after the snows of many winters have gathered on our heads, and age has ploughed its wrinkled furrows on our brow. "Till!" It may be a few years hence—before some bright project we now have mapped out for the future has reached its realisation. We may imagine we are near our coveted prize; a few steps more up the ladder, and it is ours,—the dream of life fulfilled and consummated;—when a noiseless footfall is heard behind us, tracking us up the dizzy eminence, and the startling word is whispered, 'I come!' "Till!" It may be a year, a month, a week, *to-morrow.* Oh, what a narrow bridge that word may be!—a plank between two seas—the narrow sea of time, and the wide sea of eternity—"till"—verily there may be but a step between us and death!

You, who peruse these pages, to whom *some* trust, be it great or small, is committed,—are you conscious till now, of misused or abused talent, wasted hours, neglected duties, despised privileges? What is to be done? Abandon yourself to ignoble despair? Nay, Christ's is a nobler philosophy: "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die." Satan's cruel whisper is, 'Hopeless, unredeemable bankruptcy.' But let the apostolic injunction be a heart-cheerer to any who may have been lagging behind, conscience-stricken for the present, and trembling for the future, "*Redeeming the time,* because the days are evil." Remember (for this is the gist, the keynote, the interweaved lesson of the parable) all depends on the *use* you make of your entrusted talents. Keep them unused, they will turn to decay. The hoarded garments which would have clothed the naked will become moth-eaten; the hoarded bread that would have fed the

hungry will mould. Your mental gifts and endowments may make those within the sphere of your influence wiser and better, or they may be prostituted and degraded to the basest of uses. Your wealth may be employed in scattering around you a golden shower of blessing, and when you die, the tears of the orphan and widow will be your noblest recompense; or, it may become cankered—turn to rust; and, as an abused talent, witness against you at the last. Your position in society may be made a mighty engine and instrument of good, throwing a shield over the defenceless, redressing the wrongs of the injured, setting a lofty example of purity, virtue, beneficence, to inferiors and dependents. But be unfaithful,—let position and influence be made the mere apology for reckless extravagance, profligate selfishness, or unprincipled ambition,—and the beacon for guidance and example becomes the balefire luring to destruction.

Up, then, and be doing! The heavenly Master is on His journey, and the talents for use or abuse are now in our hands. Oh, let us not have to mourn, when too late, forfeited opportunities! It may be now, or never. The talents, ours to-day, may be demanded by the Owner to-morrow. Trading may be done by us to-day, but the mart of the exchanger may be closed to-morrow. Staking all for time, all may be lost for eternity. But, laying out, with honest fidelity, the talents entrusted to us, no fear of a usurious interest on our capital thus invested for the good of men and the glory of God. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not."

XVI.

Gethsemane.

"AND WHEN THEY HAD SUNG AN HYMN, THEY WENT OUT INTO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES."—MARK XIV. 26.

"THEN COMETH JESUS WITH THEM UNTO A PLACE CALLED GETHSEMANE, AND SAITH UNTO THE DISCIPLES, SIT YE HERE, WHILE I GO AND PRAY YONDER."—MATT. XXVI. 36.

"AND HE CAME OUT, AND WENT, AS HE WAS WONT, TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES; AND HIS DISCIPLES ALSO FOLLOWED HIM. AND WHEN HE WAS AT THE PLACE, HE SAID UNTO THEM, PRAY THAT YE ENTER NOT INTO TEMPTATION. AND HE WAS WITHDRAWN FROM THEM ABOUT A STONE'S CAST, AND KNEELED DOWN, AND PRAYED, SAYING, FATHER, IF THOU BE WILLING, REMOVE THIS CUP FROM ME; NEVERTHELESS, NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE, BE DONE. AND THERE APPEARED AN ANGEL UNTO HIM FROM HEAVEN, STRENGTHENING HIM. AND, BEING IN AN AGONY, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY: AND HIS SWEAT WAS AS IT WERE GREAT DROPS OF BLOOD FALLING DOWN TO THE GROUND. AND WHEN HE ROSE UP FROM PRAYER, AND WAS COME TO HIS DISCIPLES, HE FOUND THEM SLEEPING FOR SORROW, AND SAID UNTO THEM, WHY SLEEP YE? RISE AND PRAY, LEST YE ENTER INTO TEMPTATION."—LUKE XXII. 39-46.

GETHSEMANE.

WE approach now,—let it be with reverent steps,—the most deeply sacred of all the memories of OLIVET.

However hallowed it be to follow the Divine Redeemer to His most cherished and frequented Home on the Mount, or to track His footsteps to its oratories for midnight prayer;—however delightful to join in thought the jubilant multitudes on the Hosanna road and listen to their glad acclaims, far more solemn and impressive surely is it, to enter the precincts of that lonely Olive Garden—the scene of the last agony—the field whereon was waged the stupendous conflict, on whose issues was suspended the world's redemption. If around no other spot of the Mount there gathered hallowed memories but this, GETHSEMANE alone would have given to Olivet peerless and undying sacredness. No locality is visited with intenser interest by the traveller in Palestine, than that cluster of venerable olives, with "their gnarled trunks and scanty foliage" —the reputed relics of earth's most sanctified scene of anguish and suffering.* Even though there be a difficulty —an impossibility—in identifying with certainty the precise spot, this we confidently know, that if the traditional scene be rejected, (which we are not disposed to do,) the true locality must at all events be close at hand. Let us

* See introductory chapter, p. 22.

gather then in imagination, eighteen centuries ago, within these consecrated precincts, and watch Redeeming Love in its deepest agony and most glorious triumph. Let us turn aside and see this great sight—the bush burning with fire, and lo! the bush is not consumed. From the old Fathers Cyril and Augustine, downwards, in commenting on the transcendent subject which is now to engage our thoughts, an appropriate comparison and contrast has been drawn between the first and the second Adam; a garden being, in either case, the scene of conflict. "Gethsemane," says a later German divine, "becomes to us an Eden, and is transformed with its horrors into a peaceful retreat. Within its circuit we are safe from the judicial inquiry, 'Adam, where art thou?' In this garden flows the never-failing river of God which waters the new Paradise."

We shall limit ourselves, in the present chapter, to the SCENE itself and its accompaniments; reserving for the next, the consideration of its DEEPER MYSTERIES.

It may help us in the contemplation of the outer framework of this mysterious picture, to mark a few of the preliminary details given by the different Evangelists. On the evening of the day corresponding to our Thursday, the Lord of Glory, at the close of the Paschal Supper, in the small upper room on Mount Zion, had instituted, in the presence of His disciples, the great New Testament memorial feast: "*And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into* THE MOUNT OF OLIVES."* What else could this hymn be, which rose from the lips of these assembled guests, but the well

* Mark xiv. 26.

known Hebrew HALLEL, that cluster of time-honoured psalms which had been for centuries used on the same occasion by thousands and tens of thousands; and which, that very night, was being intoned by thousands more? That "Hymn" was a nation's prayer for the coming of her King; a nation's supplication for the offering of the great sacrificial Oblation. But it contained in a nobler, truer sense, the utterances of Messiah Himself,—the sublime words with which He went forth to His mysterious struggle as the Vanquisher of Death, and "to open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers." The annals of the suffering Church record, how her martyrs braced themselves for rack and flame, by making their cells—like the apostle-prisoners at Philippi—vocal with songs of praise; or in some of those bloody encounters, where truth and conscience were at stake, we have read of strains of Christian melody rising to heaven, when the ranks were in the act of forming in battle. How interesting to think of this Prince of Martyrs, this great Captain of Salvation, (Himself about to be made perfect through suffering,) singing these songs of Zion on the eve of conflict—the earnest and pledge of victory! Strange and incongruous indeed may seem such jubilant melodies, preceding the darkest 'memory of Olivet,' when the Divine Sufferer had unveiled to His omniscient eye, all His untold and unutterable anguish. But for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. In crossing the brook Kedron—the "brook by the way"—He could with joy "lift up his head," (Ps. cx. 7.) God, His Heavenly Father, who giveth "songs in the night," (Job xxxv. 10,) had imparted, in His case, a new and

holier meaning to the prophetic words, "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel," (Isa. xxx. 29.) Christ "singing a hymn" ere He went to 'the Mount!' It was like the first note of the "new song" that was to be sung through everlasting ages in heaven, by the "hundred and forty and four thousand"—the ingathered church of the Redeemed. That Hallel, as we have just said, was on the lips of rejoicing multitudes throughout the land, at that hour. But ONE alone, had the right to take up and appropriate, in the truest sense, its loftiest strains—"The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord," (Ps. cxviii. 14–19.)

Having sung this Paschal hymn, they went out immediately in the direction of the MOUNT OF OLIVES,—descending from Mount Zion by the King's Gardens, or traversing the pathway which in all likelihood would lead then, as now, under the eastern wall of the city. In either case, they would cross the Valley of Jehoshaphat—where the Kedron, (the black brook, as the word means,) swollen it may be by the last of the latter rains, murmured along its rocky gorges.*

* Dr Barclay supposes that the Saviour and His disciples approached

It was night — probably the last watch, — between our eleven and twelve o'clock;* night in its silent hour, yet not night in its darkness. The bright passover moon, with its attendant stars, shone in the quiet heavens. A few twinkling lights may have lingered in the city close by, or among the white tents that covered the slopes of Mount Olivet, and told of the great yearly convocation from all parts of Palestine to keep the solemn anniversary. Nigh the eastern bank of the Kedron was this olive grove or plantation: in the present moonlight, the shadow from the opposite side of the ravine may have been projected upon it, veiling it in partial darkness. Jesus, as we have noted

Gethsemane rather by the streets of Jerusalem, crossing the Tyropœon by the great bridge of Solomon; passing through the Temple, (whose gates were kept open at night during the passover season,) and thence across the Kedron by the Red heifer or Scapegoat Bridge,—at whose eastern terminus he is disposed to place, the upper portion at least, of Gethsemane. This, he conceives, would give more truth and significance to the expression, "He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kedron, where was a garden," &c., thus crossing the brook by the elevated viaduct. With reference to the Red heifer Bridge, while these pages are passing through the press, a letter has appeared in the *Times* of September 24, 1867, from the head of the Palestine exploration party, from which I extract the following:—"I am also excavating near the Golden Gate, where a fellah says he found a tower, which may possibly be the remains of steps; but it is too far north for the remains of the Red heifer Bridge. . . I was quite sceptical about the existence of such a bridge, until within the last fortnight, but the Mishna is so explicit about it, that I have taken it up in earnest. I have already excavated to a depth of about twenty feet below the present east side of the Haram Area, where there are two stones bulging out—something like the springing of an arch—with no result. The bridge, I think, must have commenced from a point 600 feet north of the south-east angle." Such is the latest information on a question of much interest. The researches of these laborious investigators, whom we saw personally at work nigh this very spot, may, in a few months, throw much valuable light on this 'Olivet memory.'

* Gresswell.

particularly in a previous chapter, was no stranger to that Garden. Some indeed suppose it to have been an olive yard or farm, belonging to a disciple who had joyfully granted it to his Divine Master. St Luke, introducing the history, says, "He went, *as he was wont*," to the Mount of Olives. That same spot, as we have also previously observed, had doubtless oft before listened to His prayers, as if He had been desirous, by previous fellowship with His Father in Heaven on the same hallowed ground, to consecrate *it*, and to nerve *Himself* for that struggle on which He was now to enter! * The betrayer, too, seemed to have been familiar with the favoured resort. He may have often tarried at the gate of that garden, and heard the same direction, which was now to be given under more awful circumstances, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder." Nor need we limit it to a place of devotion. We may here repeat the surmise, that it may have shared the honour with Bethany, of being the Judean Home or Lodging-place of the Divine Pilgrim. That houseless Wanderer who slept on the planks of a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee, may have pillowed His weary head, oft and again, on the sod underneath these sheltering olive-boughs: as a stranger in the land, and a wayfaring man, He may have turned oft aside here to tarry for a night. GETHSEMANE may even have been a place of resort —a rendezvous—for inquiring disciples. Who can tell, but it may have been there that Nicodemus came "by night," to speak of the deeper mysteries of the kingdom? If so, we

* St Luke seems further to indicate a well known locality on the Mount of Olives. He does not mention the word Gethsemane. It is "at the place," (ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου.)

should be warranted in including that beautiful and instructive third chapter of St John's Gospel (wherein are some of the most gracious and precious utterances of Redeeming love) among the memories of 'the Mount.'

While on the way to the Garden, Jesus seems to have delivered His farewell discourse (or the latter portion of it at least) in hearing of His disciples. At the close of the 14th chapter of St John, He suddenly interrupts His solemn address—His wondrous words of comfort,—as if some sudden impulse had seized Him, or some inner voice had whispered that "His hour was come." He pauses at the supper-table and gives the summons, "*Arise, let us go hence!*"—Hence? Where? From the hour of communion to the place and the season of conflict. He resumes the interrupted valedictory by His well-known spiritual comparison of the Vine and its branches. The new figure is supposed by some to have been suggested by an actual vine revealed in the moonlight as they walked along, in one of the Jehoshaphat vineyards, or on the slopes of Olivet. But His own agony is at hand. The olive-grove is in sight. He dare not keep His disciples longer in ignorance of the impending trial. The discourse being finished, and they proceeding as we may suppose for a while in profound silence, wrapt in meditative thought, with a strange undefined presentiment of what was at hand, He makes the revelation, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad," (Matt. xxvi. 31.) "The hour is *now* come," says He again, as they have reached the depths of the valley—(to Him truly in a

figurative sense "the Valley of the shadow of Death")—"that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone!" These were, doubtless, to them, startling announcements. The disciples were very familiar with that road, especially so, during the preceding days. Each evening of that eventful week, as we have seen, had been spent in the quiet village of Bethany, under the roof of Lazarus. Doubtless, therefore, in rising from the supper-table and taking the wonted path conducting to the Mount, most (or all) of them would imagine, that their Divine Master was about to resort, as heretofore, to the same hallowed retreat, and renew congenial seclusion and fellowship among the friends He loved. But on reaching the gate of the olive-garden, there is a different resolve announced; and He thus alike prepares them and Himself for His hour of trial, "Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder!"

Let us mark at the threshold of this mysterious place, His gentle, tender, unselfish dealing towards His apostles. Throughout His whole valedictory discourses, there is not a word breathed of His own sorrows. The opening sentence is the key-note to all: it is *their* broken hearts alone He thinks of, "Let not *your* hearts be troubled." And again, when He alludes, for the first time, to their 'scattering'—forsaking Him when their sympathy would be most needed—He adds, in the same breath, the merciful and kindly promise, "*But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.*" As much as to say, 'Think not of this gloomy period of anguish and desertion. Ye *shall* be offended because of me; I know too well you will act an unworthy part; but here is a keepsake for you—a word of

solace which I ask you to treasure in your memories. I am to triumph over this mystery of darkness. Though ignominy and death are this night before me, I shall rise again; and, remember the word I now speak—I shall go before you into Galilee; there, I shall forget and forgive all your weakness of faith and unrequited love; there, I shall see you and meet you and comfort you!' And again, in this first injunction at the garden-gate, mark, once more, His considerate reticence. He does not wish to affright them with a full revelation of that tragedy of woe, which was all unfolded to His own inner gaze. He speaks of it as gently as He can. He uses the mildest description of what is before Him, "Sit ye here," (not while I go to that uttermost conflict,) but "Sit ye here while I go and pray!" It was indeed 'prayer;' but such a wrestling—such a soul-struggle, as neither earth nor heaven had ever before witnessed—prayer "with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save him from death," (Heb. v. 7.)

The eleven are left at the outer precincts; but three out of the sacred company are permitted more nearly to approach: just as in His Church still, there are some privileged to gaze more deeply than others into the mysteries of His love, and to hold with an unseen Saviour more intimate and endearing fellowship. The three apostles here selected to be within a stone's cast of their beloved Master, and to be witnesses of His humiliation, are the same three who had been the witnesses of His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, who had made the magnanimous but too confident avowal of fidelity, and the two sons of Zebedee, to whom He had previously promised fellowship in His cup of suffering.

While these follow their great Lord amid the deeper shades of the garden, the mysterious Sufferer himself seems to have plunged farther still into the solitude. A horror of great darkness comes upon Him. Mark says, "He became sore amazed and very heavy." Matthew says, "His soul became sorrowful"—"exceeding sorrowful," (encompassed and environed, as the word means, round and round with grief)—"sorrowful even unto death!" * He fell on His face. He is prostrated on the cold clay amid the chilling dews of that season and that midnight hour. Great drops of blood mingling with His sweat, are the exponents of superhuman agony, and moisten the turf to which He convulsively clings. In these moments of intense and vehement emotion, feeling Himself companionless, alone,—three times He rises and goes to the three disciples, telling them of His anguish, and then returning afresh to the conflict.

Oh touching testimony, in the midst of this tremendous scene, to the *perfect manhood* of the great Redeemer—His yearning after human sympathy. It is too solemn an hour and spectacle for the eyes of all the eleven: but He seems as if He could not dispense with a limited number;—"Tarry *ye* here and watch WITH ME!"—*With me!* 'Your presence is the only prop and support I have in this fearful struggle!' And when, on His return, He found them "asleep," see how

* Matt., "ἤρξατο λυπεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν" . . "περίλυπός." Mark, "ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι." Luke, "ἐν ἀγωνία." The following are the different renderings in the earlier versions: WICLIF—1380, "He began for to dread and to be annoyed"—"He was made in agony, and prayed the longer." TYNDALE—1534, "He began to wax abashed and to be in an agony—My soul is very heavy unto the death." GENEVA—1557, "He began to wax sorrowful and grievously troubled. . . He began to be afraid and in great heaviness." RHEMS—1582, "He began to fear and to be heavy."—*See Bagster's Hexapla*

He mourns the absence of the sympathy He so needed. "What! could ye not watch with ME one hour?" He returns a second and third time, even though He knows their eyes are sealed in slumber; just as the child clings to its parent in the thunderstorm, and clasps that parent's hands; although he can render no aid, the very feeling of presence mitigates fear and dispels a sense of danger. But, what a withering rebuke! It might well have gone as an arrow to their hearts, "could ye not watch *with Me?*" 'Ye promised to *die* with me, Can ye not *watch one hour?* Often, O faithless ones, for whole nights have ye toiled at your nets on Gennesaret, and surrendered your hours of needed repose. On this *one* night of temptation and anguish can ye not spare your Lord *one* hour? Simon, where is thy boasting, "Sleepest *thou?*" John, where is thy love? Where is he who so lately leant on my breast at supper? I have come looking for pity and I find none, and for comforters and I find none!' If He were to have uttered the challenge now, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism which I am baptized with?" which of the coward sleepers could dare venture on the old presumptuous answer, "We are able?"

In connexion with these sufferings, He speaks of some mysterious *cup.* You will observe, this cup, whatever it be, formed the main cause of His woe. At the sight of it or thought of it, His soul recoiled. As He holds it with trembling hand, He utters the prayer, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" It seems to have been after the first approach to the disciples, and after the first utterance of the prayer for the passing of the cup, that a new incident

arrests us in the inspired narrative—a new personage appears. Hitherto the Lord had been alone; not a sound of step or voice obtruded on His silent agony. The hum of the Paschal multitudes in the city was hushed at that midnight hour; nothing was heard, but perchance the murmur of the Kedron, or the rustle of the olive boughs in the nightly breeze. But a bright angel from the mansions of heaven is now seen by His side,—an angel "strengthening Him." We dare not be wise beyond what is written. What that angel did or said is unrecorded. Man—His own disciples—had denied Him sympathy in suffering; While the Divine Bridegroom tarried, they slumbered and slept. It would seem as if the arrested gaze of the celestial multitudes was directed on the spot where their great Lord was bowed in anguish; and a representative was sent down to assure Him, that if earth was wrapt in grief and unconscious slumber, all Heaven was watching, in silent expectancy, the stupendous conflict. One thing we may well believe, the angel did *not* tell Him. He did *not* tell Him that he was sent to answer the thrice-uttered prayer, and to proclaim it 'possible' that the cup might pass: if so, the disciple representatives of the Church on earth, might well remain outside the gates 'sleeping with sorrow'—sunk in the slumbers of everlasting despair! If we can dare surmise what passed, (if aught passed these angelic lips,) would it not be, to rehearse the awful necessity for these sufferings, and the glorious rewards consequent on them? would it not be to tell of the crown rising above the cross—the resurrection morning—the triumphal ascension to Heaven, as Conqueror over sin and death—the glories of the second Advent—the

everlasting joy and triumph of His ransomed Church through eternity. Or possibly, that celestial Visitant may have been delegated to convey no more, than some solacing but all-glorious message of love from the Eternal Father. Be this as it may, the angelic appearance had mightily invigorated Him. His great depression, after that, is over. The language of the Prayer is changed. Convinced of the impossibility of eluding the cup, He says, "O my Father, *if this cup may not* pass away from me except I drink it; thy will be done."

At last, the conflict is ended, (the *soul conflict* at least.) Though other sufferings are at hand, *physical* suffering is little to Him, after the moral contest from which He had now come forth as conqueror. Oh, as the torchlight and the moonlight together reveal to us the Person of the Sufferer, as we see Him coming forth from the gate of the olive-garden, perhaps with the drops of agony still crimsoning His attire, we are led to adopt the language of the prophet, and to listen to the Redeemer's reply, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me!"

"He knelt, the Saviour knelt and pray'd,
When but His Father's eye
Look'd through the lonely garden's shade
On that dread agony;
The Lord of all, above, beneath,
Was bow'd with sorrow unto death.

"The sun set in a fearful hour,
The stars might well grow dim,
When this mortality had power
So to o'ershadow Him,
That He who gave man's breath, might know
The very depths of human woe.

"He proved them all; the doubt, the strife,
The faint perplexing dread,
The mists that hung o'er parting life,
All gather'd round His head.
And the Deliverer knelt to pray—
Yet pass'd it not, that cup away.

"It pass'd not—though the stormy wave
Had sunk beneath His tread;
It pass'd not—though to Him the grave
Had yielded up its dead.
But there was sent Him from on high
A gift of strength for man to die.

"And was the sinless thus beset
With anguish and dismay?
How may we meet our conflicts yet,
In the dark and narrow way?
Through Him, through Him, that path who trod,
Save, or we perish, Son of God."

XVII.

Gethsemane.

"AND HE CAME OUT, AND WENT, AS HE WAS WONT, TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES; AND HIS DISCIPLES ALSO FOLLOWED HIM. AND WHEN HE WAS AT THE PLACE, HE SAID UNTO THEM, PRAY THAT YE ENTER NOT INTO TEMPTATION. AND HE WAS WITHDRAWN FROM THEM ABOUT A STONE'S CAST, AND KNEELED DOWN, AND PRAYED, SAYING, FATHER, IF THOU BE WILLING, REMOVE THIS CUP FROM ME; NEVERTHELESS, NOT MY WILL, BUT THINE, BE DONE. AND THERE APPEARED AN ANGEL UNTO HIM FROM HEAVEN, STRENGTHENING HIM. AND, BEING IN AN AGONY, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY: AND HIS SWEAT WAS AS IT WERE GREAT DROPS OF BLOOD FALLING DOWN TO THE GROUND. AND WHEN HE ROSE UP FROM PRAYER, AND WAS COME TO HIS DISCIPLES, HE FOUND THEM SLEEPING FOR SORROW, AND SAID UNTO THEM, WHY SLEEP YE? RISE AND PRAY, LEST YE ENTER INTO TEMPTATION."—LUKE XXII. 39–46.

"WHEN JESUS HAD SPOKEN THESE WORDS, HE WENT FORTH WITH HIS DISCIPLES OVER THE BROOK CEDRON, WHERE WAS A GARDEN, INTO THE WHICH HE ENTERED, AND HIS DISCIPLES. AND JUDAS ALSO, WHICH BETRAYED HIM, KNEW THE PLACE; FOR JESUS OFTTIMES RESORTED THITHER WITH HIS DISCIPLES. JUDAS THEN, HAVING RECEIVED A BAND OF MEN AND OFFICERS FROM THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND PHARISEES, COMETH THITHER WITH LANTERNS, AND TORCHES, AND WEAPONS. JESUS THEREFORE, KNOWING ALL THINGS THAT SHOULD COME UPON HIM, WENT FORTH, AND SAID UNTO THEM, WHOM SEEK YE? THEY ANSWERED HIM, JESUS OF NAZARETH. JESUS SAITH UNTO THEM, I AM HE. AND JUDAS ALSO, WHICH BETRAYED HIM, STOOD WITH THEM. AS SOON THEN AS HE HAD SAID UNTO THEM, I AM HE, THEY WENT BACKWARD, AND FELL TO THE GROUND. THEN ASKED HE THEM AGAIN, WHOM SEEK YE? AND THEY SAID, JESUS OF NAZARETH. JESUS ANSWERED, I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT I AM HE. IF THEREFORE YE SEEK ME, LET THESE GO THEIR WAY: THAT THE SAYING MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHICH HE SPAKE, OF THEM WHICH THOU GAVEST ME HAVE I LOST NONE."—JOHN XVIII. 1–9.

GETHSEMANE.

IN the previous chapter, we entered the sacred precincts of Gethsemane, and in the dead of night beheld a Divine Form kneeling there. OLIVET rises above Him, silvered with the Paschal moon. Pomegranate and cypress, olive and palm which encircle His solitude—the silent witnesses of His unspeakable anguish—are hanging thick with dew; as if sympathetic nature would shed her mute tear-drops over the Adorable One, wrestling unsuccoured at the base of that mountain which had so oft been trodden by His footsteps of love, and listened to His words of tenderness.

We now come to speak of the deeper mysteries of the scene. It is one thing to contemplate the mere framework of the picture,—another to comprehend the meaning of the picture itself; to enter the awful depths of that olive-grove, and understand the secrets of what is transacting there.

"The synoptic record of Gethsemane," says an able commentator,* "follows in strong contrast with the seventeenth chapter of St John." Striking indeed is that contrast! In an instant, we become spectators of a strange, and, at first sight, unaccountable perturbation—a mystery of suffering. The wonted calmness and equilibrium of that divine-human nature seems, for the time, shattered and destroyed. A few moments before, He is the mighty cedar: now He is a bruised

* Stier, *in loco.*

reed. A few moments before, we contemplate a sea of glass mirroring the peace of heaven: now every billow seems crested with wrath and woe. A few moments before, when in the *cœnaculum*, or under the quiet moonlit heavens, He pours out His soul in a majestic utterance of devotion—sublime unfaltering accents—the co-equal, co-eternal Son claiming the rights of His elect Church and people in the language of a conqueror: now, by a sudden collapse, the voice of triumph is subdued, and merges into a wail of tearful anguish. Bewildered, fearful, panic-stricken, He lies prostrate on the ground, with blood forced from the pores of His sacred body—the exponents of a superhuman and ever-deepening agony. That cup—that agony, what is their inner meaning? The Greek liturgy speaks of "all the sufferings of Christ known and unknown." What is the nature of sufferings which can thus be measured by no earthly plumb-line?

We may venture on three preliminary remarks regarding them.

(1.) It is manifest that this struggle in the garden was one *Jesus had been looking forward to with profound emotion.* "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." "Now," says He, "is the hour and the power of darkness." "Now is my soul troubled, what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour."

(2.) Another element that strikes us in the agony is, that *there was no visible outward cause for it.* There was no hand of man upon Him—no crown of thorns, no sword, no nails, no spear, no scourging, no frown of mortal foe! Nay,

He had *sympathy* so far: He knew that though they were asleep, there were sympathising hearts among the slumberers at the gate, and He had the higher sympathy and support of the ministering angel. Yet, notwithstanding, we hear groans, and mark tears and blood. He seems to make the words of the prophetic psalm His own, "I am poured out like water;" and, in the absence of any *apparent* reason, to utter the appeal in that midnight of suffering, "Behold, and see, was there ever any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" or, as that has been paraphrased from the original by an eminent divine, "Were ever wounds like unto my wounds, causing me to be melted as in a furnace, wherewith the Lord, in the day of his fierce anger hath stripped me bare, as a tree that is stripped of its leaves?"

(3.) Another feature in this mysterious hour, worthy of note, is, that He never lost the consciousness that God was His Father! "Father!" "My Father!" "Abba, Father!" are the expressions used by the different Evangelists as proceeding from the lips of the august Sufferer. He approaches the garden, saying, "Father, glorify thy name." He speaks of the cup as His Father's mingling, and the prayer for deliverance is a prayer to His Father. Though He lies struggling on the earth, apparently a weak, helpless worm, "I am a worm and no man;" yet He never loses the consciousness that He is a *Son*.

Again, then, we ask, what was the cause, what the constituents and ingredients of that bitter cup, what the mystery of that agony and bloody sweat?

We may arrive most satisfactorily at an answer to that question, by one or two negative assertions. Let us state

what does *not* account for these sufferings. This may be done in a series of propositions.

(1.) *The agony was not caused by the presence of Satan.* Some have thought so.* They have resolved the whole story of Gethsemane into a stupendous conflict with the King of Terrors. True, He *was* there. We have reason specially to believe that on that hour of superhuman suffering He concentrated all His might; that He regarded it as the decisive moment which would determine whether He was to retain the world in vassalage, or be Himself vanquished and destroyed. In the description of the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, when the Arch enemy found himself foiled and baffled at each successive attack, the description closes with the words, "And the devil left him for a season,"—"*For a season!*" language that would seem to indicate that he went back beaten and panic-stricken to the place of darkness, to concoct with his emissaries one other grand assault against the world's Incarnate Redeemer. The *season*—the time for this great struggle had arrived, and, with his newly-forged weapons, he comes forth, burning with revenge, to try and retrieve his former discomfiture. Nor was he, at the moment, without ready material for malicious assault. With bitter irony he could use the old argument and temptation of the desert, to unbelief and distrust in the divine protection and goodness. Would not such barbed missiles as these be hurled at the Adorable Sufferer,—'Where are Thy trusted friends at the hour they are most needed? One of them is a traitor plotting Thy death: some are asleep; all the rest will ere long prove craven and coward, and be scattered like

* So Lightfoot and others.

sheep upon the mountains. Where is Thy Father? Where is the answer to Thy prayers? God-deserted and God-forsaken—unsuccoured in Thine agony, "O Lucifer, Son of the morning, how art thou fallen?"' Christ, too, had evidently anticipated his coming and his assaults. He speaks of "the hour and *power* of *darkness:*"—"The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." Nay, we are forced to infer that some dread spirit of temptation WAS prowling in these gloomy precincts, and that the Redeemer found it necessary, three times, to warn His disciples of his presence, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into TEMPTATION." We recognise, therefore, the presence and power of Satan as *one* awful element in these moments of suffering; and, to the pure, stainless soul of Jesus, contact with this spirit of evil must have been anguish indeed. Even for a pure, high-minded *human* being to be compelled to associate with the degraded and polluted and profane,—how painful the fellowship. What, then, must have been the meeting of purity with impurity—essential holiness with essential sin—the Prince of darkness with the Prince of light?

But the presence of Satan cannot account for *all.* The great Redeemer encountered, as we have just noted, the same antagonist in the wilderness. But we read of no such overpowering prostration of soul and body,—we read of no tears, no groans, no convulsive struggles, no prayer for the passing cup, no copious sweat of blood. Nay, rather, all was the calm majesty of triumph; the King of Truth silencing the Father of lies with no other weapon but the Word of God, saying, "It is written."

(2.) *The agony was not caused by the dread of death.*

Some have thought so. They dwell exclusively on the words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." True, indeed, He who was bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, could not be exempt from this fear. There is an instinctive law in human nature which leads to a recoil from the thought of dissolution, and the finer the sensibilities are, the greater this shrinking is. His sinless nature made Him no exception to the sentiment of universal humanity, "It is a dread and awful thing to die." Death, moreover, to the Lord of life must have been "a strange contradiction;"—or rather, it must to Him have been a sad and terrible testimony to the fearfulness of sin. "Death by sin" had wrought such havoc in His own world, He could not fail to shrink from the anticipation of it. But the mere dread of dying, in itself never could account for such intensity of agony. To say so, would be to represent the Divine Master as infinitely beneath His disciples and martyrs in courageous endurance and magnanimity. Thousands of them faced death, and that, too, in its most revolting and aggravated form, without a pang; rejoicing, in the very hour of ignominy and torture, that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Nor, indeed, do we require to go to the Christian Church and the noble army of confessors for examples of brave and heroic suffering. The common soldier is ready, for a meagre pittance, to join the forlorn hope, and face without wincing the terrible assault and the cannon's mouth. Shall we mock the Prince of Sufferers by assigning as the main (or sole) reason for that horror of great darkness, that prostrate body, that thrice-repeated agony of prayer, these drops of blood exuding

from His brow, that He is merely standing in dread of the hour, which even the wretched felon is found to confront with the smile of indifference?

(3.) *These sufferings were not for personal guilt.* Who among us, if God were in a moment to gather into one heap, and place vividly before our eyes the sins of our past lives—unveiling all the turpitude and malignity of our transgressions—who among us, but might well clasp the ground in trembling agony and be filled with the horror of despair? Cases there have even been, of outer interpreters of mental anguish, akin to those of which we have now been speaking. History records of the royal murderer of hapless thousands at the massacre of St Bartholomew — that the thought not only haunted his dying moments—but saturated his dying pillow with blood. This was conscience waking up in avenging retribution against the guilty. With the Sufferer of Gethsemane all was different. He was without sin: not a shadow of impurity ever darkened that stainless soul. He could at that moment have summoned from every hamlet and village in Palestine, which His steps of mercy had visited, hundreds of witnesses to His pure and holy and beneficent life and deeds. Here was a tongue that knew no deceit—an eye that never cast a guilty look—a soul that never harboured an unholy thought. Without one shadow of deviation, His meat had been to do the will of His Father in Heaven. Even devils had been forced to bear the attestation, "We know thee who thou art, the *Holy One* of God." Every other child of humanity might have pointed to that cup filled to the brim with personal transgression, and trembled at the retributive vengeance at

hand; but there could have been nothing of personal retribution in these untold sufferings of the pure and holy Jesus!

(4.) Once more, *these sufferings were not necessarily connected with His death and resurrection.* It is true He needed to *die* before He could *rise;*—He needed to descend into the grave, before He came forth 'the abolisher of death' and the 'Resurrection and life' to all His people: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." But why *such* sufferings? If He required to die, merely, that He might rise from the dead and be an earnest of resurrection, why not some gentle dismissal of His spirit? Why spread that couch of protracted anguish in Gethsemane? Why not a death-pillow tended by His own disciples or by the gentle hands of the brother and sisters at Bethany? What the need of these redundant tortures of mind and body?*

If all these different surmises fail to explain the causes of His sufferings, let us devoutly ask, though it be but in a single sentence—Why and whence this agony?—why the Rock of Ages thus "stricken, smitten of God,"—or buffeting these waves of woe? I answer;—Reader! it was your sins and mine that were filling that cup and extorting that wail of sorrow! Jesus was there as our *Substitute* and *Surety.* The infinitely pure ONE was there standing at the bar of Justice;—"The Lord laid upon Him the iniquities of us all." Sinless Himself, He was 'federally' counted as guilty. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Mark, it is *soul suffering* that is the burden

* See Symington on the Atonement, p. 133.

of His anguish. In fulfilment of the words, "Thou shalt make his *soul* an offering for sin," He cries, "Now is my *soul* troubled"—"My *soul* is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." That cup was filled to the brim with *curses*: His holy soul was like a vast reservoir, into which the transgressions of every elect child of Adam rushed from every age, demanding satisfaction. He was "sore amazed!" He was filled and overwhelmed with horror and consternation at the fearful havoc sin had wrought, and at its awful penalty, which He was now bearing. The wrath of God—the terrible manifestation of His displeasure at iniquity—was upon Him. He was the true spiritual Atlas, bearing on His shoulders the sins of a guilty world. He was the true antitype of the Red Heifer, immolated somewhere close by, on that same Mount, its fleece stained with blood. "Surely," we may well exclaim, as we see drop by drop crimsoning the sods of Gethsemane, "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows:" "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." In all these respects it is manifest, that a parallel between His and His martyrs' tortures is inadmissible. The mysterious withdrawal of the Divine countenance, in consequence of imputed guilt, was an element of soul-anguish all unknown to them. Oh! no other, no less a cause, will suffice to explain this tragedy of suffering. Take away the idea and element of vicarious sacrifice, and Gethsemane becomes a sealed mystery. Take away the element of vicarious sacrifice, and we ask in vain, how could He who stilled the waves and walked on their crested tops, who made devils crouch submissive at His word, who made disease take wings and flee away, and plucked the very

crown from the brow of death—how could He, on any other or lower supposition, be subjected to such apparently helpless and humiliating ignominy—saving others, and yet with an apparent inability to save Himself? But, with this Gospel key, we can somewhat (yet, how feebly) understand and unlock the secret. We can withdraw these curtains of thick darkness, and find them shrouding the peerless truth, "Christ our passover, sacrificed for us." These sufferings were not calamities;—they were punishment judicially inflicted. Christ was the Sin-bearer, bearing not merely the *punishment* of sin, but sin itself. "Deep," in His case, literally "called unto deep." Need we wonder that humanity should stagger and tremble in an hour like this? It was anguish beyond the endurance of any finite nature—an eternity of woe was condensed into it! Who has failed to be arrested by that significant question of the Sufferer, "Now is my soul troubled, *and what shall I say?*" "*What shall I say?*" Shall it be, 'This cup must pass—I shall dash it untasted to the ground—I shall cancel my covenanted engagements—I shall escape this travail of soul—wipe the blood drops from my brow—cast the garb of flesh aside, and ascend to my Throne above the stars of God?' Nay! as He struggled, "like some strong swimmer in His agony," with the billows of wrath sweeping over His defenceless head, He heard a voice of woe (loud as the sound of many waters) coming floating up from the future—a surging never-ebbing tide of human anguish. Is He to listen to this cry of suffering ages, and by His own baptism of blood to work out for perishing millions an everlasting salvation? or is He to snap these chains which bind Him, "save *Himself*,"

and leave a world and its myriads to perish? "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive be delivered?" (Isa. xlix. 24.) Shall He convert that Jehoshaphat Valley, where now we behold Him, into (what the Jews supposed it to be,) the place of Judgment? Shall He erect a throne of retributive vengeance on the heights of Olivet, and utter the word of terrible condemnation? The awful alternative "*condemn*" *or* "*not condemn*," seemed, at this moment, in His hand—trembling in the balance;—to pass the cup or to drink it; to save Himself or to save others. But, it is done!—the work is accomplished! His soul "HAS been troubled," and what *has He said?* Let the arrested hosts of heaven tune their harps and sing the glorious answer—"God sent *not* His *Son* into the world to CONDEMN the world, but that the world through Him might be SAVED!"

"O Holy Jesus, who for our sakes didst suffer incomparable anguish and pains, commensurate to Thy love and our miseries, which were infinite, that Thou mightest purchase for us blessings upon earth and an inheritance in Heaven!"*

Here we might well pause. But to complete the "memories" of that ever memorable night, in their relation to OLIVET, let us, in a few sentences, follow the Divine Sufferer on leaving the scene of His superhuman struggle. He rejoins His still sleeping disciples. He employs words of tender reproach—reminding them that the opportunity they had of watching *with* Him and *for* Him was now over. Once (a few moments ago) it was theirs. But the *one* chance

* Jeremy Taylor's *Life of Christ.*

they had, of keeping such holy vigil in the hour of His sorest need, had passed away for ever,—"Sleep on now, and take your rest."* Often, doubtless, in the future, must the merited taunt have come back upon them, forcing a pang from their inmost hearts. This we may imagine, in spirit at least, would be the soliloquy evoked by so painful a remembrance —'What an opportunity we lost by these unhappy slumbers! How sad—how ungrateful *then*, of all times, to have wounded and lacerated His loving soul by our faithlessness! How undeserving we were of the shelter of His extenuating words —His merciful excuse, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."' Oh, are we not reminded, from the case of the disciples, of our own similar oft and cruel defections?—traitors to holy trust,—unfaithfulness to holy vigils, at the very time when these were most sacredly imperative;—great opportunities of watching with Christ and glorifying His name, which, forfeited and foregone once, can never return. Well may we breathe the prayer in all such times of our weakness—

"O Thou, who in the garden's shade,
Didst wake Thy weary ones again,
Who slumber'd at that fearful hour
Forgetful of Thy pain;
Bend o'er us now, as over them,
And set our sleep-bound spirits free;
Nor leave us slumbering in the watch
Our souls should keep with Thee."

The hour of sleep, however, is now ended, and the trumpet again sounds for battle—"Rise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." It cannot escape the observation of attentive readers of the inspired narratives, that

* These words have received different explanations: we incline to that adopted by Calvin, Meyer, and others.

from this moment, onwards to the last bitter cry on the cross, (which does not fall within these memories,) the Sufferer of Gethsemane presents a different and totally altered bearing. The hand of man is indeed now upon Him; the gleam of the lantern—the midnight torch, and the flash of the traitors' swords, beheld from the scene of the agony coming down the opposite ravine,* all tell of dastardly purposes of betrayal, torture, and death. But they disturb Him not in comparison. The climax has been reached;—the death of His death is over in that garden. The confidence which characterised His wonted life is restored. He emerges from the gloomy glades, no longer a trembling, agitated, convulsed sufferer; but composed—resolute—self-possessed. The storm is changed into a calm. A learned commentator heads this new chapter significantly as "*The Invigoration.*" Invigorated—resuscitated—indeed He was. He had "poured out His soul in strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Even with Calvary before Him, God, His Heavenly Father, seemed to have already taken off His sackcloth and girded Him with gladness: joyfully the Good Shepherd goes forth to lay down His life for the sheep. The last jubilant words of the Hallel hymn He had sung in going to the Mount, might appropriately still be in the lips of the Great Victim on His way to the sacrificial altar—"God is the Lord, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even

* From the present traditional locality of Gethsemane, the entire length of the eastern wall of the city with its gates is visible, so that the eye of Jesus could clearly discern, through the Olive thicket, the approach of the band as they emerged from these, and hurried down the steep slope.

unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever," (Ps. cxviii. 27–29.) Even the troop of traitors who are now confronting Him, composed, as they were, of iron soldiers of Rome as well as Jewish mercenaries, are awestruck by His meek majesty. They require no torch or lantern to track out His lurking-place: He is ready to meet them, and answer their demand by self-surrender. "Whom seek ye?" He asks, in a voice of unfaltering composure; and when He again says, in similar calmness, "I am He,"—so staggered were they at the demeanour of their Victim, that, as if struck with a thunderbolt from heaven, they reeled backwards conscience-smitten, and fell to the ground! Nor need we add, was there any attempt at resistance, although it is too evident, from the recorded incidents, that any encouragement on the part of the Divine Master would have received a willing response from the surrounding disciples. It is not too much to affirm, that, had He pleased, He might have easily escaped from the toils that were gathering around Him. In the light of that full Passover moon, His captors could not stealthily come upon Him, as they might have done had the night been dark. Even when lying, as they now were, panic-stricken on the earth, might He not (leaving them thus unmanned and paralysed) have fled like His royal ancestor across the Mount, and taken shelter amid the wild wadŷs of the Jordan wilderness? Or, to make a supposition more befitting the dignity and divine glory of His Person, might He not either have exercised His own supreme prerogative as the Lord of Life; or summoned

that strengthening angel (who had just been with Him in the garden) as a minister of vengeance, and left the ground strewed with corpses? He desires, however, no such evasion. The lost apostle might have spared the injunction, "Take Him and hold Him fast." He calmly awaits His fate. He wishes to illustrate His own former saying, "I have power over my own life—I have power to lay it down:" "For this cause came I unto this hour." With the Kedron before Him, and the dark memories of that night on *Olivet* left behind, "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Let us leave GETHSEMANE with the saying of the Master in our ears,—His noble, unselfish appeal to these murderers—surrendering Himself—shielding His disciples—"If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." It sounds like the voice of the Shepherd regarding "other sheep not of that fold." They seem befitting words in His lips, just as He emerges from the agony. It was, in a sentence, the announcement of the great principle for which His soul-struggle had there been undergone—giving up Himself, that these—(yes, these countless millions on millions of all time)—might have their captive bands loosed, and "go their way," "walking and leaping and praising God." "He saved others, Himself He *cannot*—nay, Himself *He* WILL not save." "Let these go their way!" As *we* hear this petition of the Mighty Pleader ascending before the bar of Justice for *us*, and see the Sinless One going forth, across the Kedron valley, a willingly bound Victim, that the guilty, through eternity might be free;—well may we catch up from His lips the glorious refrain of His own Hallel hymn—"*O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever!*"

XVIII.

The Ascension.

The Last Parting on the Mount.

"AND HE LED THEM OUT AS FAR AS TO BETHANY, AND HE LIFTED UP HIS HANDS, AND BLESSED THEM. AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHILE HE BLESSED THEM, HE WAS PARTED FROM THEM, AND CARRIED UP INTO HEAVEN."—LUKE XXIV. 50, 51.

"AND WHEN HE HAD SPOKEN THESE THINGS, WHILE THEY BEHELD, HE WAS TAKEN UP; AND A CLOUD RECEIVED HIM OUT OF THEIR SIGHT. AND, WHILE THEY LOOKED STEADFASTLY TOWARD HEAVEN AS HE WENT UP, BEHOLD, TWO MEN STOOD BY THEM IN WHITE APPAREL; WHICH ALSO SAID, YE MEN OF GALILEE, WHY STAND YE GAZING UP INTO HEAVEN? THIS SAME JESUS, WHICH IS TAKEN UP FROM YOU INTO HEAVEN, SHALL SO COME IN LIKE MANNER AS YE HAVE SEEN HIM GO INTO HEAVEN. THEN RETURNED THEY UNTO JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT CALLED OLIVET, WHICH IS FROM JERUSALEM A SABBATH-DAY'S JOURNEY."—ACTS. I. 9–12.

THE LAST PARTING ON THE MOUNT.

REDEMPTION is now completed, and the Divine Conqueror is about to ascend to His Heavenly Throne; THE MOUNT OF OLIVES is again selected as the scene of this closing, hallowed memory of His sojourn on earth.

When personally visiting the spot, with nothing was the writer of these pages more satisfied, than the utter unsuitableness of the monkish traditional site of the ascension, at the village of Jebel-et-Tur, on the summit of the Mount, and the peculiar adaptation of one of the many ridges around Bethany (spurs or offshoots of Olivet) for this transcendent scene. The former—if he might so express it—is so obtrusively conspicuous as at once to be rejected. The only difficulty in the latter is, the selection of the one, among so many appropriate localities, which present themselves as claimants for this event of surpassing interest to the Church of every age. One of these he ventured to select, as according at once with the conditions of the sacred narrative, and with his own, perhaps pardonable, predilections. It is a secluded prominence, forming the one side or ridge of a little valley, a few hundred yards to the left of the pathway above Bethany, just as the top of the now ruined village appears in the hollow beneath. The magnificent prospect towards the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea—so familiar to the eye of our Lord—is full in view. The olive,

the fig, and the almond—the latter, at the time it was thus seen, in full blossom—interspersed the rocks scattered around. Erroneous it may be, conjectural it must be; but in the writer's imagination and memory, this spot will ever be sacredly identified with the scene of the great Assumption.

Spots which have been peculiarly and sacredly associated to us in life, are often those fondly clung to in the prospect of departure. 'In that village churchyard,' says the old man who has weathered many of life's storms, and feels the winter of age set in upon him, 'I should like these ashes of mine to repose: they would be close by the cottage-home, where a mother's voice spoke to me life's earliest and best lessons, and a mother's love and tenderness wiped many tears away. It was under yonder spreading oak, that voices, now hushed in silence, were wont merrily to ring. It was under yonder lowly sanctuary roof, that I first heard words of consolation and hope,—that wayward youth received its timeous warnings, and that I was first made alive to the momentous concerns of eternity. There, (please God,) within hearing of the old murmuring brook and the Sabbath bell, and under the shadow of the ancestral trees, would I like to wing my departure to a better world,—there I would seek to die, and there to be buried!' It was a kindred feeling that made old Barzillai prefer his rough mountain-dwelling in Gilead, to the luxurious seat that was offered to him at the king's table in Jerusalem: "Let me go back again," said he, "that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and my mother." It is a similar sacred and hallowed magnetic power which induces, at this day, the old Israelite, as age furrows his

cheek with wrinkles, to bend his steps towards the earthly Zion, that his body may sleep with the dust of his fathers in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

May it not have been some such kindred feeling and association which prompted our Blessed Lord—sharer as He was of human sensibilities—to make selection, as the scene of His final departure, that which had been peculiarly and pre-eminently hallowed during His earthly pilgrimage? OLIVET! it was the spot of all others consecrated by suffering and love; oft and again it had been perfumed with the incense of His prayers,—it had been suffused at midnight with His tears; down amid the grove of its Gethsemane olives, it had been bathed with His blood; its rocky highway had echoed to the songs of the jubilant multitude, and its soil been carpeted with the palm-branches which strewed the Conqueror's path: the hallowed village on its ridge (ever-sacred Bethany) had been selected as the scene of His most enduring friendship. It was surely befitting that this earthly audience-chamber—this haunt of mingled joy and woe, abasement and triumph,—it was meet that He should make it the gateway of Heaven, the robing-room of His Celestial Palace,—that on its height He should convene the chariots of God, "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels"—the bright convoy that was to bear Him to His everlasting Throne!

Behold, then, the Saviour and the Eleven wending their way up the mountain. It is their last week together. If the disciples were not fully cognisant of the fact, their Lord at least was. He employs the time in sacred converse. He promises them the aid of superhuman power in prosecuting

their gigantic mission;—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth, are to be the wide field of their labours. And now, as the divine Redeemer is about to take farewell of the world, where in a garb of flesh He had sojourned for three-and-thirty years, how does He leave it! It was a world that had disowned Him, scorned Him, slain Him. The memories of unrequited love were studding the earthly landscape all around. Even those warm hearts at His side (trusted friends) had, in the hour of peril, proved faithless. There was nowhere His great heart of purity and goodness had a perfect reflection of itself, save in that blue expanse above, whither His eye was now turned. Might we have wondered, if, at that moment, when the songs of Heaven were floating in His ear,—when its burning spirits were waiting by the opened portals to welcome Him in,—could we have wondered had He resolved, once and for ever, to forget an ungrateful earth,—to obliterate from His thoughts the dark story of its forgetfulness and sin,—that all His thoughts and joys would now be centred on that blessed world where no sin can enter—where no dark experience of sorrow can interrupt a Sabbath of endless communion! How different! His parting act, as the bereaved men of Galilee strain their eyes upwards, is one of benignity and love to the world He is leaving. With uplifted hands, He breathes on these representative men His blessing. Words, not of upbraiding or wrath, but of unutterable tenderness, are the last which die on their ears; and when these can no more be audible, the outstretched arms are a silent symbolic legacy bequeathed to His disciples and His Church in every age, telling that His interest in them is still the same.

Bereft though they be of His visible presence, they may rise from their posture of awe and prostrate sorrow, conscious that His benediction and blessing are still following them,—that no distance, no space, no time, can ever separate them from His love.

And what is the great *fact* of the Ascension—that which undoubtedly must have impressed itself most powerfully on the minds of these eleven spectators? It was, that Christ ascended *as a* MAN; that He left this world still carrying with Him His glorified *humanity*. The very same Saviour who had broken bread with them at their communion feast, —who had met them and ate with them on the shores of Tiberias—who had walked with them that day up the steeps of Olivet,—yes, "*the man Christ Jesus*" had ascended in a bodily shape. The last vision they saw, was a smile on the same lips that were wont to say, "Peace be unto you!"—the same hands that were laid on the sick, and that had been stretched in anguish on the tree—these same hands had just been seen uplifted still, as if He could embrace a whole world in His arms of mercy; and in that attitude, and wearing unchanged the well-known human form and feature, He had vanished into the world of the glorified. We may imagine, when the disciples were walking up the mountain-side, or when they had reached the top of the secluded ridge, and had some dim strange presentiment—some indefinite idea that they were about to be deprived of their Master's blessed presence—we can well imagine that they would at least be ignorant as to the nature of His departure. Would it have surprised them if He had said, 'A body was prepared me to come to this world, which I had undertaken to redeem. In

a *body*, I needed to offer myself a whole burnt-sacrifice: my divine nature, being spiritual, was incapable of suffering. But now, having completed the expiatory part of the mediatorial work, I leave behind me this earthly tabernacle—"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A bright cloud will presently encircle me—a lustrous robe to clothe my divinity; in this cloudy chariot, the indwelling Godhead will ascend to its own heaven.' Might He not thus have left the disciples and the attendant angels to consign His body (as the body of Moses on Mount Nebo) to some quiet resting-place in these secluded heights? Might not the Marys have been again summoned with their spices and linen to embalm the hallowed frame, ere laying it in its honoured sepulchre? No: with a body (glorified indeed, but in a visible form like theirs) He ascends. Bidding defiance to one of earth's most stable and unalterable physical laws—showing that He was Lord of matter as well as of spirit—the body rises without wing or chariot-wheel up in its radiant garment of cloud, the invariable symbol of Deity. When, in profound amazement, (their bosoms swelling with alternate fear, and hope, and joy,) the disciples saw the last speck vanish in the blue distance, and when the thought may have occurred to them, 'Ere He reach the celestial gate, angels (the warders of that spiritual world) may yet divest Him of His humanity, and usher Him, in His glorious spiritual nature, into the heaven of heavens;'—lo! two of these white-robed beings* are present at the gazers' side, with a message to dispel all doubt—"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same

* Acts i. 10.

Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "This *same* Jesus!"—He has entered heaven wearing that humanity; and in ages to come, when the number of His elect are completed, in that humanity He will again come forth. As a *Man*, He is now seated on the throne. As a *Man*, He has gone to prepare a place for His people. As a *Man*, He ever liveth to make intercession. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that MAN whom he hath ordained." 'Go, go,' men of Galilee, on your glorious errand to the ends of the earth; and as ye proclaim that gospel of peace and joy to the weary and heavy laden—the poor, the broken-hearted, the storm-tossed—tell them this glorious *fact*—ye have seen it with your eyes and we endorse its truth—"a *Man*—(a MAN)—shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest!"

What a joyful assurance! We can follow the great Redeemer through His pilgrimage of matchless love on earth, and think that "that same Jesus," wearing the same body which groaned, and toiled, and suffered, is now at the right hand of God. The gates of heaven soon closed on the straining eyes of these gathered disciples. As they looked wistfully towards the spot where the vanishing cloud was last seen, there was nothing but the calm azure—the still, silent air,—like the wake of the vessel furrowing the ocean, athwart which the waves have again closed, leaving no trace behind of its course. One of these eleven, the Beloved disciple, was privileged, at a subsequent period, in his Patmos-exile, to gaze in vision within these distant portals. What saw he? It

was "*that same Jesus,*"—the loving Being with outstretched hands on OLIVET, only under another expressive and touching symbol. "Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" crowded around some object of mysterious adoration, in the form of a Lamb, bearing scars and blood-marks. He could be in no doubt who it was. The word which had formerly designated Him on earth, spake of Him in glory,—"*Behold the Lamb of God,* which taketh away the sin of the world." Not only is it Christ ascended, Christ glorified, but Christ wearing the old badges of humiliation and suffering—"still red in His apparel"—His vestments "dipped in blood;" and the song of that ransomed multitude, as they cast their crowns at His feet, is, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!*" Another disciple (not one of these eleven) was also gifted with the same heavenly vision. Stephen, on his martyr-pillow, was privileged to look within the half-opened portals, and to proclaim to his murderers and to the Church, the sight which arrested his enraptured gaze. It was '*that same Jesus:*'—"I see the heavens opened, and Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God." Yes! Jesus "standing" with outstretched arms, (the arms and the smile of OLIVET still unaltered,) stooping over His servant's tortured frame, as if impatient to receive the first of the noble army of martyrs who were hereafter to "*praise Him.*"

Reader! be it yours to exult in this same theme of exalted comfort. You have a *Brother on the Throne.* Changed indeed He is in His outward condition; for His season of trial and temptation and suffering—His "hour and power of darkness" being now at an end—He has passed amid the joys and hallelujahs of the Church of the glorified, the songs

of eternity ever vibrating in His ears. But His human heart —the heart which of old loved, and pitied, and sympathised, knows no change. It remains a heart of unaltered and unalterable tenderness still. "That same Jesus" addresses every soul striving with temptation—battling with evil—crushed with sorrow; and says, "Fear not; I AM He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore:"—'I know your sorrows, I have endured them: I know your soul-struggles, I have felt them: I know your temptations, I have encountered them: I know your very tears, I have wept them: amid the wreck of dear earthly hopes and friendships and sympathies, let your heart-throbs be stilled and your tears dried, by this elevating assurance, "And there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."'

XIX.

The Ascension.

The Joyful Return across the Mount to Jerusalem.

"AND HE LED THEM OUT AS FAR AS TO BETHANY; AND HE LIFTED UP HIS HANDS, AND BLESSED THEM. AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHILE HE BLESSED THEM, HE WAS PARTED FROM THEM, AND CARRIED UP INTO HEAVEN. AND THEY WORSHIPPED HIM, AND RETURNED TO JERUSALEM WITH GREAT JOY."—LUKE XXIV. 50–52.

THEN RETURNED THEY UNTO JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT CALLED OLIVET, WHICH IS FROM JERUSALEM A SABBATH-DAY'S JOURNEY."—ACTS I. 12.

THE JOYFUL RETURN ACROSS THE MOUNT TO JERUSALEM.

IN the preceding chapter, we ascended the heights of OLIVET, and from one of its eastern ridges, within sight of honoured Bethany, we listened in thought to the parting benediction. We beheld the cloud receiving the Person of the glorified Redeemer, and the Eleven straining their eyes until its glory vanished from their sight. We may linger with profit, yet a little longer, around the same hallowed scene, and glean a few of the comforting truths with which the theme of the Ascension is replete. We shall cease to wonder at the climax to which the apostle rises in his summation of gospel doctrine, "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, *received up into glory*," (1 Tim. iii. 16.)

When the disciples, all solitary, had to wend their way back to Jerusalem, what, we are ready to think, must have been the agony of their bereft feelings? Surely no sons ever returned from laying the head of an honoured parent in the grave with a sadder sense of utter desolation and abandonment. What! to tread the world alone! To enter these temple-courts uttering, through their crushed hearts and irrepressible tears, "Ichabod! for the glory has departed!" Shall they abandon themselves to despair? Does Matthew say, 'I shall return again to my custom-house and my illicit

gains'? Does Peter say, 'I shall return again to my fishing-craft on the lake of Galilee'? Does Nathaniel say, 'I shall go again under my fig-tree, and, spreading sackcloth under me, bewail my absent Lord'? Does Thomas say, 'I can no longer reach thither my hand and thrust it into His side; I must lapse into former incredulity, and be faithless and unbelieving as before'? Does Andrew go smiting his breast, asking in vain his old question, "Where dwellest thou?" while the reply is no more returned, "Come, and see"? When a brother comes from a far distance, we hail him: his advent is subject of great joy. How do loving hands at home deck his apartment, and make hearth and walls smile a greeting on the long absent one. But when the time of furlough is over, and when he has to go back again to the far country, the last farewell is muttered through tears and swelling emotion, and the house is hung with a drapery of sorrow. We can understand Christ's first coming to be joyful. We can understand His second coming to be a "blessed hope." But to leave His Church in widowhood and loneliness —to gladden it no more with His personal presence,—oh do we not expect to hear these disciples of Olivet (at that moment of mysterious parting, when the cloudy chariot is bearing Him from their sight,) crying out in an agony of importunate supplication, "Tarry, Lord, tarry; entreat us not to leave Thee, nor to return from following after Thee!" And when they find *that* to be in vain, we expect to see them, with tear-dimmed eyes and faltering step, descending the mount, and uttering the one note of overmastering sorrow, "They have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him!" No: with

hearts unwontedly brave in such an hour, we read that "they returned *to Jerusalem with great joy.*" We look for tears, and we hear songs; we look for sackcloth, and, lo! they are girded with gladness. We look for them daily in the Temple, mourning over the wreck and ruin of their dearest earthly hopes, and crying with the plaintive prophet, "How doth the city sit solitary!" but they are "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." This ascension of their Master, which, to all human appearance, would have overpowered them with inconsolable grief, seems to have put a new song into their lips. When Christ first said these things unto them, "sorrow filled their hearts;" but He had forewarned them also that their "sorrow should be *turned into joy.*" Some mighty equivalent would be given, which would more than indemnify them for the loss caused by the deprivation of His personal presence,—by His leaving the world and going to the Father. Let us follow, for a little, the footsteps of the disciples across the well-known path so oft trodden in the companionship of their beloved Lord, and offer some reasons why His ascension, to them and to the Church in every age, is subject-matter of joy.

As we have just observed, and more particularly referred to in the preceding chapter, Jesus Himself had prepared the disciples for His departure. He had taught them to associate that departure with a positive blessing. "It is expedient for you," said He, "that I go away." "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father." Again, when on His Resurrection morning, He met one of the Marys, and saluted her with the "*all hail*" of joy, and when He wished, moreover, through her, on that joyful

occasion, to send a gladdening message to His apostles,—what was that message? Was it, 'I am now risen, the Lord of immortal life. I shall now remain permanently with you, never more to leave you; death itself shall not separate between you and Me'? Nay, it was this: 'I am speedily to leave you,—to be withdrawn from visible fellowship: "Go, tell my disciples, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."' And the Church, in her own inspired songs, has been taught to make the ascension of Christ material for thanksgiving and joy:—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them," (Ps. lxviii. 18.)

The ascension of Jesus was a joyful event, *because it attested the full completion of His mediatorial work.* Redemption was the great remedial method of restoring all that man had forfeited by sin. By the great consummating deed of the Saviour's resurrection, emphatic demonstration had been given that the penalty of sin was removed, the demands of the broken law fully satisfied. If there had been one flaw in His person or work, or had one single transgression of His people been unatoned for, He still would have been detained the victim of death: Death's iron fetters would still have bound Him; the superincumbent stone would still have been fast by the mouth of His grave. By rising triumphant from the tomb, and leaving behind Him His vacant sepulchre, He proved incontestibly

that the wages of sin were all paid—the discharge granted. But this was only the partial, or, if we might call it, the negative result of the atonement. It gave the glorious assurance that the awakened sword of Justice had been returned to its sheath, and that there was now "no condemnation." But we needed a loftier attestation; we needed to be certified, not only that He had made "peace through the blood of the Cross,' but that the gates of the true Eden—the kingdom of heaven—were again opened to all believers. And how shall we obtain this desired certification? His own entrance within these gates as our Representative, and the Representative of His people, will form the alone satisfactory pledge and guarantee of our final admission into the realms of glory,—that Paradise lost will be, in every respect, Paradise regained and restored. But He *has* ascended; and in doing so, He has given His people the earnest—the first instalment, so to speak, of their everlasting bliss. In the words of an otherwise enigmatical passage, "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." He, the first sheaf, has been waived in the heavenly sanctuary —the "offering of the first-fruits"—the pledge of the myriad sheaves which are yet to follow. When we see, therefore, a chariot of cloud, in the sight of the infant Church, bearing her adorable Lord to the celestial portals, what more powerful assurance could be vouchsafed to those He has redeemed with His blood, that the lost heritage of everlasting bliss was theirs, alike in possession and reversion; and that with a life, deathless as His own, where He is, there they should be also? If, as their federal Head, His *resurrection* gave them the public guarantee that the wages of sin being paid,

they were in the eye of a righteous God and a righteous law '*justified*' fully, freely, and for ever; His *ascension* was the pledge and evidence that "whom He *justified*," them He would also "GLORIFY," (Rom. viii. 30.) If the eleven disciples of old "looked steadfastly" (unmoved) up into heaven, as they saw the cloud ascending; so may we, by the eye of faith, look steadfastly on this great and peerless truth. Yes, I may love to linger around the Cross of Calvary, and to hear the expiring cry of anguish, (which was truly the shout of victory,) "*It is finished:*" I may love to traverse in thought the way to the tomb, and stooping over the rifled cave, to hear the angel's gladdening announcement, "*He is not here, He is risen!*" but if I wish to have the crowning assurance of a salvation completed—"the gift of God which is *eternal life*,"—I love better to go to Mount Olivet and witness "the receiving up into glory;" and as I join the returning disciples, to listen to words sung through their tears, "God hath gone up with a shout,—the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to our God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises."

The ascension of Jesus was a cause of joy, because it *secured for the Church the gift of the Holy Spirit.* The reason He assigned for it being "expedient for Him to go away" was the sending of the "Paraclyte" or "Comforter." "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." Again, it is said, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, *because that Jesus was not yet glorified.*" As the old dispensation was one of type and figure, and ceremonial observance, so, the new dis-

pensation was to be emphatically a "*dispensation of the Spirit.*" At that interesting hour we have been contemplating on Mount Olivet, may we not think of this new dispensation being, so to speak, inaugurated. It was a solemn crisis in the world's history. As God the Father had been revealed in the early dispensation: as God the Son had been revealed during His incarnation;—so the Holy Ghost was now, in "the last days," (the closing era of the Church,) to complete the full manifestation of a Triune deity. As the gate of heaven opened to receive the glorified Son, the Dove of peace, and joy, and consolation was ready to take his flight down to earth, and to hover with outstretched wings over the Church of God. The sacrifice made by a nobler than Elijah being completed, the answer was to be "by *Fire:*" "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." At the very first meeting of the bereaved Church, this baptism by fire, of the Holy Spirit, took place. The apostles became mighty in word and in deed. Out of weakness they were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. While they mourned an absent Lord, they felt the greatness of the compensating boon. He "brought all things to their remembrance:" He enabled them to write with accuracy their Gospels—the narrative of the never-to-be-forgotten scenes in their Lord's personal ministry. He showed them things to come: He gifted them with prophetic pens to sketch the destinies of the Church in the future; and to that Church, in all ages, He was to be known (and is known) by the blessed name of '*Comforter*'—enlightening it with His presence, and sanctifying it with His grace. One of

His special offices, moreover, was to be the unfolder of Christ to His Church and people: — "He shall glorify me." May not our blessed Lord, as has been suggested,* have had reference to this, when He thus addressed Mary, "Touch me not, FOR I have not yet ascended." As if He had said, 'When I have ascended, THEN you may touch me!' How? You may touch me by faith; the Holy Spirit, as my Glorifier, will enable you to "reach hither your finger." "He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

The ascension of Jesus was to the Church subject-matter of joy, *because it enabled Him to reap His own heavenly reward.* God the Father had promised, that when He had made His soul an offering for sin, He should "see His seed and prolong His days." In His own last intercessory prayer, as a victorious King, He claims the stipulated recompense of His conquests,—"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father! glorify thou me with thine own self—with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." And in this same wondrous prayer, He tells what the essence of that mighty recompense is, which makes Him forget all the anguish of His blood-stained earthly path,—"I am glorified *in them.*" *In them!* It is His ransomed Church who are to supply through eternity the chief revenue of His glory; through them, "unto principalities and powers," in heavenly places, is to be made known "the manifold wisdom of God." The ascension of Jesus is thus frequently in Scripture represented as the recompense of His mediatorial sufferings, "He hum-

* Butler of Dublin's *Sermons*, 2d Series, p. 192.

bled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; *wherefore* also hath God highly exalted Him." If it gives us joy on earth to see the advancement of a loved friend,—a son, a brother, a parent,—if we hear that their goodness and worth, their unwearied beneficence and sterling integrity, have been acknowledged and rewarded by some substantial earthly recompense,—what ought to be the Church's and the believer's joy at beholding the Friend of all friends—the Brother of brothers—set as King on His holy hill of Zion, seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied; enthroned in the midst of His Church-triumphant, and rejoicing with them in their everlasting joy!

The ascension of Jesus is matter of joy to the Church, *as He is engaged in heaven to carry on the work of intercession.* By His death He wrought out atonement: by His intercession He perpetuates its purchased blessings and renders them for ever efficacious; so that in the noblest of senses it may be said, "He being dead yet speaketh." What a wondrous subject for contemplation! God in our nature, (He who once trod this earth in our tried and sorrowing and suffering and tempted nature,) now wearing a glorified human form at the right hand of His Father, and, "with His own precious blood," appearing in the presence of God for *us!* He is the *Great Angel of the everlasting covenant,* with the censer "full of much incense," waiting to receive the prayers and pleadings of His people, that He may present these sprinkled with the fragrance of His own adorable merits: our "*Counsellor*"—one whom the Father "heareth always,"—whose plea is not that of Mercy for

the undeserving, but of Justice suing for the blood-bought *rights* of His Redeemed. His bosom of love is represented as "girded about with a golden girdle," emblem of His inviolable affection and attachment to His people,—that loving them from "the first of time," He will love them "unto the end." Myriad prayers are ascending from burdened hearts, (and that, too, every moment,) but none bewilder by their diversity, none weary by their constancy. The "*much incense*" of His golden censer knows no diminution: ever emptying and yet ever feeding, and always full. He can ask for all, and answer all, and attend to all: no boon within the compass of Omnipotence to bestow, which cannot be secured by the Omnipotent—"*Father, I will!*" Yes, say, is it no subject matter of loftiest joy and consolation, to look upwards to the right hand of God, and behold "the Lamb that was slain," pleading, in silent eloquence, for His Church on earth through these memorials of anguish? to behold this "Rainbow round about the throne" (the cloud of His people's sins behind it) claiming for them exemption from the deluge of wrath;—God Himself saying, "When I see the blood I will pass over you:"—"The bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, and remember the everlasting covenant!" Often, doubtless, had these eleven disciples seen, in their own earthly Temple on the great Day of atonement, the High Priest vanish from the sight of the multitude, as he went into the holiest of all with his vessel of blood: now, they would understand the full significancy of the olden type. How, in a moment, would all their thoughts and previous conceptions of heaven be changed! Before, it was a wide, dreamy, ethereal region, tenanted by spiritual

essences. Now their eyes (ay, their heart of hearts) were fixed on their own beloved Master. It was now no longer a strange and distant world to them. It had already a *Home*-look. They saw One there, for whom they had a love greater than for all on earth beside, consecrated as a Priest for evermore. We know not what their prayers had been previously; but as they descended the mountain, we can almost fancy we hear their musings and converse: 'Let us hasten,' they would say, 'to that upper chamber in Jerusalem. Let us gather our little band. Let us use our new and mighty argument. Said HE not before He left, "Whatsoever ye ask in MY NAME, I will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full."* Let us go and pray in HIS name,—"Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." 'For His name's sake, hear us, pity us, strengthen us! We shall glory in our infirmities if thy power, O Christ, will rest upon us!' Could even *they* not join a later apostle, as he climbs from step to step, till thus he reaches the heigh of his high argument—"It is Christ that died, *yea*, RATHER that is risen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh *intercession for us!*"

What a lofty subject is suggested by this hallowed memor of Olivet! What an incentive for having our hearts, our conversation, our citizenship in heaven—that *there* our Livin Head is,—the Being of beings—"*that same Jesus,*" with His unchanged humanity! Many can look with sacred interest to

* See *Tongue of Fire*, p. 17.

the graveyard—"the long home" of earth—and say, 'I have a friend, a brother, a sister, a parent THERE!' Christians, you can look to the everlasting home of the skies, and say, 'I have a Brother on that throne! One who feels so tender an interest in His people, that He is said to keep them as the apple of His own eye. No intermission in His love, no alteration in His tones, no diminution of His affection.'

Nor can we omit to add one closing thought. In doing so, we have to retrace our steps, for a moment, from following the disciple-band, with their mingled musings of sadness and joy, to stand once more on the ridge of Ascension, and listen to the last words of the heavenly messengers as they still spake of "that same Jesus." It was this, that He was "*so to come again.*" It was His second coming in glory; the same theme we have found, in the course of these "memories," so often on His lips,—the most frequently repeated of all His OLIVET sayings,—as if He had counselled His delegated angels to wake once more the silent echoes of the Mount with the great truth, on which upon its sacred ridges He had loved to dwell. And it was with reference to this blessed truth and blessed hope that they added the *question*, (shall we call it the gentle rebuke,) "Ye men of Galilee, *why stand ye gazing?*"

They say the same to us. Church of God! drawing ever nearer to this solemn event, "why stand ye gazing," why stand ye lingering? Christian, why loiter on the mountain top! Tarry not:—squander not your precious moments. Who can tell how soon again the Heavenly gates may be opened for the descent of your enthroned Lord? Go, go! trim

your lamps! put oil into your vessels, "He cometh—He cometh to judge the earth!" "That *same Jesus shall so come!*" The apostles, when they heard this, folded not their arms in indifference and sloth. They went forthwith with stout, bold hearts, to do their work manfully in the Church and the world. They would long, doubtless, for that blessed moment of reunion, when they could exclaim, "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him." But they knew that the best *waiting* for Him was *working* for Him—waiting by patient suffering, or working by active duty. "Who," asks the Psalmist in that beautiful ascension-psalm, where the gates are summoned to lift up their heads that the King of Glory may enter in,—"who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" He answers, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully." "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." Be assured there is nothing that will so raise you above the world, as the elevating consciousness that you are partakers of the endless life of your living Redeemer; that your lives are now hid with Christ in God, and that when Christ who is your life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Seek often to climb, by faith, these steeps of Olivet, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus how He said, "A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me." That first "little while" will soon be over—the little while of the Church's widowhood, mourning her absent Lord. But the *great while* when "*we shall see Him*," is every day drawing nearer. Every hour

is giving fresh emphasis to the words, "Yet a little while and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." Remember it is "to them also that *look* for Him, He shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." The assembled Jewish worshippers *looked* for the re-appearance of *their* High Priest, when He was ministering in the Holy of Holies. They waited anxiously in the outer porch to see the veiling curtain drawn, and the Intercessor of the nation come forth, to pour upon the multitude, with outstretched hands, the old benediction, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace," (Num. vi. 24–26.) Not till then, were the imposing services of that high day of Hebrew festival completed. Do we (of this gospel day) see through the type? Are we on the outlook for our reappearing High Priest, coming forth from the heavenly Presence to stand (who knows but it may be literally again) on that height of OLIVET, and, with the same outstretched hands of love, to say to the waiting myriads of His expectant Church, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" Are we thus "LOOKING for that blessed hope?" It was a gladdening sound to the Jewish multitudes in their Temple area, when they heard the sound of the silver bells on the hem of their high priest's garment, giving intimation of his approach:—"Blessed are they who know the joyful sound." "Blessed are those servants who, when their Lord cometh, shall be found watching!"

XX.

The Last Memory of the Mount.

"AND HIS FEET SHALL STAND IN THAT DAY UPON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, WHICH IS BEFORE JERUSALEM ON THE EAST; AND THE MOUNT OF OLIVES SHALL CLEAVE IN THE MIDST THEREOF TOWARD THE EAST AND TOWARD THE WEST, AND THERE SHALL BE A VERY GREAT VALLEY; AND HALF OF THE MOUNTAIN SHALL REMOVE TOWARD THE NORTH, AND HALF OF IT TOWARD THE SOUTH. AND YE SHALL FLEE TO THE VALLEY OF THE MOUNTAINS; FOR THE VALLEY OF THE MOUNTAINS SHALL REACH UNTO AZAL: YEA, YE SHALL FLEE, LIKE AS YE FLED FROM BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH KING OF JUDAH: AND THE LORD MY GOD SHALL COME, AND ALL THE SAINTS WITH THEE. AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THAT DAY, THAT THE LIGHT SHALL NOT BE CLEAR, NOR DARK: BUT IT SHALL BE ONE DAY WHICH SHALL BE KNOWN TO THE LORD, NOT DAY, NOR NIGHT: BUT IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT AT EVENING TIME IT SHALL BE LIGHT. AND IT SHALL BE IN THAT DAY, THAT LIVING WATERS SHALL GO OUT FROM JERUSALEM; HALF OF THEM TOWARD THE FORMER SEA, AND HALF OF THEM TOWARD THE HINDER SEA: IN SUMMER AND IN WINTER SHALL IT BE. AND THE LORD SHALL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH: IN THAT DAY SHALL THERE BE ONE LORD, AND HIS NAME ONE. ALL THE LAND SHALL BE TURNED AS A PLAIN FROM GEBA TO RIMMON, SOUTH OF JERUSALEM: AND IT SHALL BE LIFTED UP, AND INHABITED IN HER PLACE, FROM BENJAMIN'S GATE UNTO THE PLACE OF THE FIRST GATE, UNTO THE CORNER GATE, AND FROM THE TOWER OF HANANEEL UNTO THE KING'S WINEPRESSES. AND MEN SHALL DWELL IN IT, AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE UTTER DESTRUCTION; BUT JERUSALEM SHALL BE SAFELY INHABITED. . . . AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, THAT EVERY ONE THAT IS LEFT OF ALL THE NATIONS WHICH CAME AGAINST JERUSALEM, SHALL EVEN GO UP FROM YEAR TO YEAR TO WORSHIP THE KING, THE LORD OF HOSTS, AND TO KEEP THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES."—ZECH. XIV. 4–11, 16.

EZEKIEL XLVII.

THE LAST MEMORY OF THE MOUNT.

WE have now reached the concluding Memory of OLIVET: an olden "memory" indeed, so far as the words themselves contain a prophecy uttered in a distant age by a Hebrew seer; but, viewed in another sense, as an *unfulfilled* prediction, not entitled, perhaps, strictly speaking, to a place in this volume. These sublime foreshadowings of Zechariah, however, stand alone in sacred story, in thus linking a glorious past with a yet glorious future. As such, we cannot omit what are alike so interesting in themselves, and so appropriate as a closing chapter to these Memorials, encircling as they do 'the Mount' with the halo of prophetic anticipation.

The verses themselves—confessedly difficult and enigmatical—contain, in highly poetical imagery, a delineation of the Church of the future. We shall view them, in their twofold application, to the GOSPEL and the MILLENNIAL AGE.

Let us look at their primary meaning and interpretation with reference to *the Gospel age.* The Prophet's eye is directed onwards to the most memorable, or rather, the most terrible crisis in the Jewish History, (with which, in the previous chapters of this volume we are now so familiar,) when the Roman armies—like the Assyrian and Chaldean

in his own time—would be gathered around the walls of thrice-doomed Jerusalem. It was "the day of the Lord,"—the day of His vengeance and recompense,—"the day of battle." The miseries of the fated city, dwelt upon circumstantially in other predictions, are here only touched upon: the horrors of siege and capture, of plunder and massacre and captivity. It is but a momentary glimpse of the dark background, to bring into impressive relief the future bright and "glorious things spoken" of the city of God. The fall of Jerusalem,—the fall of the Jewish state, and the destruction of their Temple and worship, was to be the rise and riches of the Gentiles. It was to inaugurate a new era in the Church and in the world. From its dust and ashes a saved remnant is to go forth—the germ of a new kingdom which is to increase and spread until it become co-extensive with the globe. Accordingly, in the bold and impressive symbolism of the words before us, at that hour when the old city of solemnities is sacked and pillaged,—when the cries of her perishing thousands are ascending, apparently unsuccoured, to heaven,—lo! the Redeemer of mankind is suddenly seen to appear on His old and oft-frequented haunt. Thirty-seven years previously, He had ascended from its heights, His hands extended in blessing; and once more, in vision, He manifests Himself on that same Mount, whereon He had wept tears in anticipation of the doom which He now returns to witness. As the Divine spectator gazes from these heights, there is a still further figuration unfolded to the Prophet. By the heaving of an earthquake, OLIVET seems to cleave in twain. One-half of the mountain removes toward the north, the other half toward

the south; and it is not a mere cleft or narrow gorge that is formed between the disjointed portions, but "a very great valley."

Again, a new scene is unfolded in this moral Diorama. While havoc and death rage within the devoted walls of the city,—while thousands on thousands, as we have previously described, are there perishing, without making any effort to escape;—some ending their misery by mutual massacre, some purchasing death, however dearly, that they may close their eyes within sight of their Temple; there is a remnant —the types and representatives of the saved—God's true Israel in every age, and, perhaps, very specially of future restored Israel—who are seen bursting through the breaches in the eastern walls. Beholding this mighty valley, like a gate of safety, opened to them by the earthquake, they rush along it, with the speed of despairing men, as far as "Azal." "Ye shall flee to (or rather, *by*) the valley of the mountains," (ver. 5.) The Prophet gazes again—and yet a new figuration. This "very great valley" has hitherto been without river or stream flowing through it, and, consequently, without sign of luxuriance or vegetation; but, lo! suddenly—catching up the similar picture and vision of an earlier seer, (Ezek. xlvii. 1)—living waters leap from the Temple-Rock, flowing down the eastern terraces to the dry channel of the Kedron. They are seen to divide or bifurcate,—one-half pursues its way through the newly-opened gorge in the direction of the Dead Sea, carrying life and happiness to that desolate region—that "valley of the shadow of death;" the other, wends its course towards the Western Sea, mingling with the blue waves of the Mediterranean; and, un-

like other earthly rivers,—unlike, especially, that Kedron brook, a dry channel all summer, and only an occasional winter torrent,—this will be a perennial stream—no ice will freeze it—no drought will dry it—"in summer and in winter shall it be," (ver. 8.)

What is all this—taking the passage in its primary sense—but a vivid delineation of the power and progress of the Gospel, on the breaking up and abrogation of the Jewish economy. Christ stands in vision on His favourite mountain. His glorified feet press the very sod that had been bedewed once with His tears and His blood. As we see upheaving from its old foundations, the triple eminence which for ages had been the sacred guardian of the Mosaic and Levitical ritual,—the silent sentinel of Zion's solemnities,—as we see this "hill of God" rending in twain—its mighty masses of rock removed out of their places, and a wide opening made as far as the Jordan wilderness—have we not an expressive picture and type of the displacement of the older economy by the new. The mountain barriers, the walls of separation, which hitherto had excluded the Gentiles, are demolished; the waste places of the earth, the deserts of heathenism, are opened up;—"Who art thou, O great mountain?—thou shalt become a plain," (Zech. iv. 7.) The figure is a strong one—the disruption of a mountain as by an earthquake-shock; but not too strong to depict the mightiest epoch and revolution which had yet occurred in the Church of God, by the admission of the outer world—the "uncovenanted nations"—to the privileges of the Jew. Nor is it a solitary or exceptional figure, peculiar to Zechariah. Isaiah had employed it before him, when thus he

describes the commencement of that same Gospel era, "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," (Isa. xl. 4, 5.) The valley, as we have noted, is a *broad* one—"a very great valley"—wide enough for all to tread it—Jew and Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free. It reaches to Azal, a word which means "separation." Those once separated, Gentiles living hitherto in this 'Azal'—this separate place—"aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise," have now the intervening mountain removed—"no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." And then, how strikingly are the *results* of this earthquake depicted. The living waters gushing forth from Jerusalem, were a beautiful emblem of the Gospel's progress through the world. Christ's original commission to His disciples was, to "preach the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." From Jerusalem, accordingly, these waters emerged, and by the grace and energy of the Holy Spirit, outpoured especially at Pentecost, they became truly life-giving, carrying healing and joy wherever they went, even amid the wastes of the howling wilderness, and the desolations of the sea of Death. The old material temple of Jerusalem is destroyed; but Christ, the great antitypical Temple, takes its place. It is from Him all Gospel blessings flow, and the power of the Cross makes them "*living* waters."

Ezekiel's parallel picture is fuller, and more graphic still in its details, (xlvii. 1-6.) He sees the same vision of holy

waters issuing from under "the threshold of the house eastward, at the south side of the altar;" these getting deeper and deeper, until, at first reaching only to the ankles, they become a huge torrent, an impassable river. In accordance with the speedy upspringing of luxuriance and vegetation, wherever water is found in the east, he sees the banks of this river lined with verdant trees, and the river itself, like Zechariah's, flowing through the most barren portions of the Judah wilderness—from Engedi to Eneglaim. In regions of cheerless solitude, where scarce a blade of vegetation is to be seen, or sound heard of bird, or beast, or man—lo, the very fishermen are now spreading their nets along the shores of the new sea, formed by the Temple-river. The Asphaltite Lake itself suddenly swarms with "a great multitude of fish, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many:" "and," it is added, "it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live," (Ezek. xlvii. 6–11.) What picture could be more expressive of the spread of the Gospel, the triumphs of Christianity? The apostolic band tarried, in accordance with their Master's latest injunction, in Jerusalem, to receive "the promise of the Father," (Luke xxiv. 49.) That promised Spirit descended; the "fountain" was "opened in the house of David," (Zech. xiii. 1.) The living waters burst forth from Jerusalem; and at the divine sign, forth these accredited ambassadors issued on their high embassy. At first, it was a small rill, a feeble river—"the number of the names together were an hundred and twenty." But no longer pent up within ancient channel, the new stream rolled along, in ever augmented volume, through the

opened valley, carrying life, and refreshment, and healing to the abodes of death. Yes! even in a secular and subordinate sense, that river has carried countless blessings in its course. Where Christianity has not converted and regenerated, it has civilised. It has been the world's ameliorator. It has done what the arms of martial Rome and the refinement of æsthetic Greece never did, and never could do. It has tamed the savage, and elevated the civilised. It has dried the widow's tears, given a home to the orphan, an asylum to the poor, and struck the fetter from the slave. Wherever Paganism has reigned, there has been cruelty, licentiousness, ignorance, and slavery: its river has rolled torrents of blood. But wherever Christianity has permeated, its streams carry with them life and health, healing and joy. Without it, many a nation would at this moment have been like the barren rocks of Engedi and Eneglaim, or like the hills of Gilboa, on which there rests no dew of blessing. So that even in the secondary sense of a gigantic civiliser, most true is it, "*Everything shall live whither the river cometh.*"

Truer far is all this, regarding its saving, regenerating and transforming influences on the heart of man, and on th Church of God. What countless blessings that flowing river has brought to the soul, overwhelmed with a sense of sin, or bowed with a load of sorrow,—the parched spirit, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is! What glorious promises to sustain; what glorious hopes to cheer! In the words of Ezekiel, "By the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed," (Ezek. xlvii. 12.) Onwards this river is repre-

sented as flowing,—nothing stems it, nothing impedes its course, until "the Lord shall be king over all the earth,' (Zech. xiv. 9;) until "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea," and the world become, like primeval paradise, a well-watered garden with "the river of God, which is full of water." It is elsewhere prophetically said of the Redeemer, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Revert once more to the Prophet's figuration. Behold this Messiah-Saviour, as if standing on the heights of Olivet, looking across—as He oft did in person in the days of His flesh, and as He now does in vision in the hour of His glory—towards the desolate wastes of southern Judah: with a truer and keener gaze than that of the Prophet—the gaze of His own omniscience, He sees the symbolic river carrying health and life to a doomed and dying world. Can He fail to enjoy this divine predicted satisfaction, when He remembers that it is through "the decease He accomplished at Jerusalem" the wilderness and solitary places of earth are glad, and its deserts made to rejoice and blossom as the rose!

What makes this first view which we have taken of the scope and meaning of Zechariah's prophetic chapter more probable (viz., that it is *primarily* a history of the introduction and progress of Christianity under the present dispensation) is, that the verses which immediately follow, and which are strictly connected with those to which we have just adverted, cannot be made to apply to Millennial times; while they *do* apply, truthfully and graphically, to the existing epoch, from the commencement of the Christian era to the present age. Verses 6, 7—"And it shall come to pass

in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." This is surely a faithful and vivid picture of the Church during these last eighteen hundred years. The light "neither clear nor dark." Her glorious light of truth obscured by error, schism, superstition, idolatry, will-worship, human reason—the blots and blemishes and inconsistencies of her own members. It is a mixed, mingled, imperfect state. "Dark," yet—blessed be God—never a total eclipse; ever and anon "bright light in the clouds." Moreover, the one murky, troubled day is "known to the Lord." He who stands on Mount Olivet watches (ay, controls) these varying and apparently capricious clouds. Nor is that strange, fitful alternation of light and darkness to last for ever. The sky is yet to clear; the wading sun is yet to have a glorious setting; "at evening time it shall be light." The Church, though oft "cast down," shall not be "destroyed;" but shall come forth yet from all her troubles, "looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," (Solomon's Song, vi. 10.)

But this leads to the *second* view which this prophetic memory suggests. Let us regard it as a picture of THE MILLENNIAL AGE;—the world's evening-time—when all shall be undimmed—unclouded light. "Evening-time!" when the curfew bell shall toll and the fires shall be put out,—the fires of guilt and sin, of war and slavery, of persecution and tyranny, and the defiled fires on every idol shrine.

The literalist school of prophetic interpreters are able to draw an attractive and striking picture from this chapter of Zechariah. The premillennial theory at once regards all that is here described, not as types and figures, but as realities. That descent of Christ to the Mount of Olives is a literal descent, in His glorified humanity, with all His saints with Him. That rending of the mount, and the opening thereby formed, is considered a literal valley—the river flowing from the olden sanctuary a literal river—the Dead Sea waters literally revivified and sweetened—and Hebrew fishermen, like those of the olden time at the Sea of Gennesaret, casting their nets into the deep. With all deference to the many excellent and devoted students of Scripture who have espoused these views, we are unable to adopt the glowing picture, and prefer adhering to the old *spiritual* interpretation.* But yet,

* While in Jerusalem, in the house of an esteemed clergyman of the Church of England, previously referred to, and looking from the window of his sitting-room across the crumbling walls and buildings of the city on a full view of the ever beautiful *Mount of Olives*, I could not resist saying, I envied him in his confident belief, that the day was coming (and that perhaps ere long) when he might gaze on the literal cleft and valley, and the still more glorious literal accompaniments of Zechariah's prophecy. I felt that it would have invested, with a new and surpassing interest, a spot which I had learned already to associate with so much that was holy and hallowed, if I could employ, in a literal sense, and specially with regard to 'the Prince of Peace,' the language of another evangelical prophet, "How beautiful upon the mountains (*the* mountain) are the feet of HIM that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

It may be, in the study and interpretation of prophecy, as in other things, that the churches of Christ and their members will, in due time, be brought nearer one another; and when the words following those just quoted will be fulfilled: "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion," (Isa. lii. 8.) Meanwhile let us breathe the apostle's aspiration,

even in this, there is much surely of deep interest in the delineation here given us of millennial blessedness. We are told that Christ's sovereignty over the world, if not in visible Person, at least in visible *power*, will be complete: "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one," (ver. 9.) As yet, how partial this sovereignty is! How many nations yet refuse Him allegiance! How many false gods still usurp His sway! How vast the kingdoms which are still paying their loyalty to the god of this world! But every crown will then be cast at the Redeemer's feet: "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." As a consequence of His acknowledged sovereignty, *peace and prosperity will reign in the Church:* Vers. 10, 11, "All the land shall be turned into a plain." . . "And men shall dwell in Jerusalem, and there shall be no more utter destruction: but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited." There will be *a universal love for God's ordinances:* "The families of the earth" will go up "unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts," (ver. 16.) The old Psalm of the Church's universal minstrel, will receive then its truest interpretation from the lips of these festal throngs, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go to the house of the Lord." *Joy will reign predominant among the members of the Millennial Church:* the feast specially spoken of, is the Feast of Tabernacles—the feast of harvest—the national emblem-feast of joy—the harvest-home of the world, (ver. 16.) *The very enemies of Christ and His gospel will be ranged among*

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." "And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you," (Phil. iii. 15, 16.)

His friends: countries for ages blighted and cursed with superstition and idolatry, will now, in the name of the Lord, set up their banners: the very leaders in the anti-Christian confederacy will sheathe their swords, and, owning the sovereignty of the Lord of all the earth, enrol themselves among the number of those who, year by year, join the jubilant band in keeping the feast, (ver. 16.) And, once more, it will be a *season of perfect holiness;* a time of national and undivided consecration to God's service: "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar," (ver. 20.) The humblest offices—the most secular work will be sanctified: "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD" will be the universal superscription—the motto and watchword alike of individuals and families: the commonest flagons in the private homes will be sacred as the bowls of the sanctuary; and the cooking-vessels of the priest will be as owed as the jars holding the sacrificial blood, (ver. 21.)

And, to complete these sequences, in connexion with OLIVET, let us note the traditionary belief of Jews to this day, (suggested probably by their prophet Joel,) that Christ will come on 'the Mount' to judge the world, and that the valley of Jehoshaphat will be the scene of the great assize.* We may reject the literal tradition; but we may retain the solemn truth it represents. We have been speaking of a figurative earthquake which rent the sacred mount, and converted the fairest spot of earth into an Aceldama of ruin. The fugitives from Jerusalem escaped up the rent gorge to Azal. Let *us* flee, as from an

* The etymological meaning of the word Jehoshaphat is "*Jehovah judges.*"

earthquake—(oh let this be the closing memory—the closing lesson of OLIVET)—let us flee, through the one only way of escape, to the one only Place of "Separation," from destruction and eternal death! "Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come and will not tarry." "Put ye in the sickle," are the words of judgment in the lips of Joel, "for the harvest is ripe: multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: the Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people and the strength of the children of Israel."

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL! The name suggests yet one other thought in the light of Zechariah's prophecy. Indeed, we would eliminate from the passage one of its distinctive and chief glories,—if we omitted to note the special blessings there spoken of, in reserve for God's own ancient people. Though these living waters are spiritually to gladden and refresh all the nations, we are warranted to think of them more particularly with reference to Israel; the barren and blasted land of Palestine, for eighteen hundred years under the curse, again "growing as the lily, and casting forth its roots as Lebanon," (Hos. xiv. 5.) We believe the day is coming (and, though the fig-tree be not yet apparently "putting forth its tender leaves," may God speed it!) when these scattered outcasts will be gathered in—restored first to their own covenant land, and then led, in penitence and tears, to embrace Him whom their fathers crucified. So that, figuratively, will (ver. 10) be fulfilled—"All the land shall be turned as a

plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses." Prophecy teems with declarations of the blessings God has yet in reserve for those, still "beloved for their fathers' sakes." We need go no further, for examples, than these three closing chapters of Zechariah, supposed to form a distinct prophecy: (Chap. xii. 8,) "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." Ver. 10, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Yes! more especially true will it be of Jerusalem and ingathered Israel, that "at evening time it shall be light." Theirs has indeed been a murky day —more clouds by far than sunshine—"a day of darkness and gloominess—a day of clouds and thick darkness." But the hour will arrive, when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." Christ, as we have seen, appeared in vision to the prophet, on 'the Mount,' at the fall of Jerusalem; as if to testify His love for the Jews, even when they were His enemies—when their hands had been but recently stained

with His blood. With what joy will His feet stand again on that Mount of Olives, — when these same children of Zion will be now joyful in their King ;—when across the Kedron ravine shall float hymns to His praise ;—the Hebrew Hallelujah responded to by the Gentile Hosannah—and myriad voices wake every echo around with the ascription, "CROWN HIM LORD OF ALL!" "He will rest in His love, He will joy over them with singing." Jerusalem—yes, the literal Jerusalem—has thus, we believe, a glorious future in reversion. She will yet become the spiritual metropolis of the nations of the saved, and of the converted children of Abraham,—the High Priests in earth's new consecrated Temple. The living waters, flowing to the world's remotest lands, will go out from her rebuilt sanctuary. Restored and regenerated Israel, we have reason to suppose, will form the great missionary Church of the millennial era: (Isa. lx. 1–3, 13,) "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; AND I WILL MAKE THE PLACE OF MY FEET GLORIOUS." "In that day," when "HIS *feet* shall stand upon the (again made glorious) MOUNT OF OLIVES, which is before Jerusalem on the east," "it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and *all nations shall flow unto it.*

And many people shall go and say, (may it not be of Olivet as of Zion?) Come ye, and let us go up to *the mountain of the Lord,*" (Isa. ii. 2, 3.) The former is, at all events, without doubt, included in the divine promises uttered by the lips of another seer;—(Ezek. xxxvi. 1–4,) "Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God, Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God! Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills; . . . O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come; . . . And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord; . . . And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden," (vers. 8, 11, 34, 35.) "Thus saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called, A city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The holy mountain," (Zech. viii. 3.)

May the Lord speedily "make THE PLACE OF HIS FEET glorious." May He hasten the day, when a diadem of beauty shall once more encircle the brow of OLIVET;—when the Saviour's most hallowed 'abiding-place' in the days of His flesh, will be served heir to new "memories" of millennial happiness and peace, unmingled, like the former ones, with sadness and tears;—and when the glowing prophetic words will be fulfilled—"BEHOLD, THE DAYS COME, SAITH THE LORD, THAT THE CITY SHALL BE BUILT TO THE LORD, FROM THE TOWER OF HANANEEL UNTO THE GATE OF THE CORNER. AND THE MEASURING LINE SHALL YET GO FORTH OVER AGAINST IT UPON THE HILL GAREB, AND SHALL COMPASS ABOUT TO GOATH. AND THE WHOLE VALLEY OF THE DEAD BODIES, AND OF THE ASHES, AND ALL THE FIELDS UNTO THE BROOK OF KIDRON, UNTO THE CORNER OF THE HORSE GATE TOWARD THE EAST, SHALL BE HOLY UNTO THE LORD; IT SHALL NOT BE PLUCKED UP, NOR THROWN DOWN, ANY MORE FOR EVER."

JER. XXXI. 38-40.

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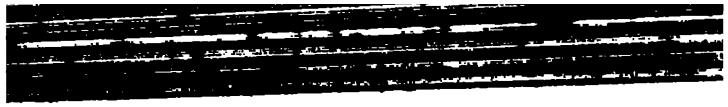

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